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ABSTRACT

The introduction, "Education and Local Development," provides a theme of rural education and development, with emphasis on widening the limits of programs and facilities to serve all age groups. International perspectives on rural education are infused into the 20 selected papers through the participation of several authorities from abroad. Four broad topics, with papers arranged from most general to specific are as follows: (1) "The Rural Situation in General" contains three papers that address quality, opportunity, and survival; (2) "The Community Situation" provides five papers dealing with community involvement, service centers, responsibilities, reorganisation and declining enrollments; (3) "The Financial Situation" offers four papers which provide a commonwealth perspective, a state perspective, and economic aspects or effectiveness; (4) "The In-School Situation" contains seven papers covering curriculum and staffing, pre-service teacher training, syllabus design, parental reaction, services and handicapped services. Conclusions provide suggestions for future efforts, emphasizing that they will need to be tractable and commensurate with specific needs of rural populations. Appendices provide the conference program and a description of the National Centre for Research on Rural Education. (AH)

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Rural Education: In Pursuit of Excellence

Selected papers from the National Conference 'New Directions in Rural Education', organised by the Education Department of Western Australia and OECD/CERI

Edited by
FRANK DARNELL
and
PATRICIA M. SIMPSON

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NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON RURAL EDUCATION

The University of Western Australia
1981

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Preface

An OECD/CERI project, Basic Education and Teacher Support in Sparsely Populated Areas, turned the spotlight on rural education and identified many of the educational needs of non-urban populations in industralized nations in the late 1970s. The results of the project clearly indicate a need to remedy traditional negligence in this area of education and the significance of national advantage that would accrue from the incorporation of local identity in educational programs. In Western Australia, where there was already a high level of interest in rural school improvement, this evidence provided the impetus for the Education Department (a participant in the OECD/CERI SPA project) to convene a national conference on rural education. Sponsored jointly by OECD/CERI and the Department, the conference, 'New Directions in Rural Education', was held in Perth in November 1979. The conference generated a multitude of new ideas and the catalystic impact of conference and public debate is evident in that initiatives that eminated from the conference are now having a positive residual effect among institutions and individuals working to improve rural education in Australia and elsewhere in the world. Few recent events can be said to have had such a positive effect on rural education as that produced by the Perth conference.

To ensure the participation of residents of rural communities in conference deliberations, a series of pre- and post-conference regional meetings were held in rural communities. Many of the principal participants of the Perth phase were involved in these meetings. This urban/rural interaction extended the conference proceedings over more than three weeks.

International perspectives on rural education were infused into the proceedings through participation by several authorities from abroad. These participants came from England, Scotland, Sweden, New Zealand, the United States of America and the Paris office of OECD/CERI. It is to the credit of the organisers that they sought to involve so large a cross section of the education community and the rural community at large. This is reflected in the papers presented here.

The conference was based on three themes: education and local development; equality and opportunity; and curriculum and staffing of rural schools. These themes gave rise to many papers but not necessarily a publishable collection. Developing a book from such a collection has inherent problems. These problems are common to all editors who are faced with the need to be selective in the preparation of manuscripts from multifaceted conferences. In this volume the choice of papers has been based on these criteria: manageable volume; balance in topics selected; and evenness in quality of content, at least as much as can be expected from such a diverse group of contributors.

The selected papers have been organised in a manner different from the conference. The themes have been replaced by four broad topics, each topic arranged to

move the reader from the most general in nature to the most specific. This plan of organisation applies to the particular topics found under each category as well as the categories themselves. The conclusions were derived from overall impressions acquired from the collection as a whole.

Although a considerable length of time has elapsed between the conference as an event and the appearance of this publication, there is value in having the contents available in book form. Much of what was said at the conference was original or had not been examined in the Australian context before. Also, many individuals who were not able to participate in the conference will have a sample of the proceedings available to them for the first time. However, it should be kept in mind that the papers contain no final statements on the subject of rural education. There is nothing definitive about this volume. Few new directions are prescribed, but the ideas expressed in the collection are gaining acceptance and it is anticipated that they will act as catalysts in the quest for genuinely new directions in rural education.

The conference title 'New Directions in Rural Education' expressed an outcome conference organisers hoped for, not something that they could demonstrate during the conference. As it happened the conference was an exercise in teasing out new directions rather than proclaiming them. It is a long and tedious process to find new directions in any of education's many facets. That the organisers' aspirations were partially realised now seems apparent and speaks to the success of the conference. This being so, the reader, it is hoped, will find in this book a collection of thoughts which will stimulate new policies and practices and thus contribute to a transformation in rural education. Pursuits in education should be never ending, always heading in yet other and potentially more promising directions. It is to this end that these papers have been published.

The Editors

Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to the process that led to the publication of this volume. Among the individuals responsible for the conference from which the papers are drawn the Chairman of the Conference Planning Committee, Dr David Mossenson, Director-General of Education in Western Australia, deserves special mention. His administrative acumen was in evidence throughout the proceedings. Others associated with conference planning and its execution such as Larry Oates, Robert Vickery, Brian Courtney and Max Angus were recognised at the time of the conference, but we wish to make our appreciation of their contributions known.

As for the book itself the individual authors are those for whom special thanks must first be given. They have all generously agreed that their work may be included in this volume and they have agreed to suggestions for change by the editors. And to the authors who contributed to the conference, but whose papers are not included in this collection, the editors wish to express their appreciation for their understanding about the process of selection and balance in compiling the book. Readers are advised that a complete collection of conference papers are on file at the National Centre for Research on Rural Education and are available upon request. A list of all papers presented are included in the conference program which appears as Appendix 1.

Among those people who had a direct hand in assisting in the preparation of the book Max Angus, Peter Dunnell and Michael Small, of the Research Branch of the Education Department of Western Australia, immediately come to mind. The Research Branch was generous enough to give the papers to us for editing and provided us with assistance whenever requested. Max Angus in particular was supportive of the idea that the Centre publish the papers.

To Dr Felicity Haynes for reading the manuscript and offering constructive comments, we express our thanks. And finally, members of the Centre's Board of Management are acknowledged for their interest in the work and for approving funds from the limited resources of the Centre for printing costs.

To all others connected with this publication we are grateful, but at the same time we stress that we alone are responsible for faults and omissions.

The Editors

The Contributors

KEN N. BIRKS is a Deputy Director-General (Administration and Finance) in the Education Department of Western Australia.

RALPH G. BOHRSON was a Program Officer, Ford Foundation, New York, at the time of the conference and is now an independent consultant.

URBAN DAHLLÖF is Professor of Education at the University of Uppsala, Sweden.

FRANK DARNELL is Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Alaska and currently Director, National Centre for Research on Rural Education, University of Western Australia.

GLEN P. EDWARDS is Director of Education, Northern Region, Whyalla, South Australia.

STEPHEN HARRIS is a Senior Education Officer in the Department of Education, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia.

IAN W. HIND is Co-ordinator, Finance Planning Unit, Education Department, Victoria, Australia.

ROBERT S. JOHNSTON is Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (Northern Division), Scotland.

ROBERT LENAHAN is a Principal Research Officer in the Department of Education, Queensland, Australia.

AUDREY LITTLE is Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology, University of Western Australia.

CY MAXWELL is a member of the Secretariat of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris.

DON MCLEAN is an Assistant Regional Director of Education, Horsham, Victoria, Australia.

JOHN NEWBY is Superintendent of Curriculum, Education Department of Western Australia.

SHIRLEY RANDELL was, at the time of the conference, Director, Disadvantaged Schools Program, Schools Commission, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, and is currently Director, Professional Development Program, in the same organization (now Commonwealth Schools Commission).

BRIAN RICHARDSON is the Principal of the Chidley Education Centre, Education Department of Western Australia.

PETER D. TANNOCK was Professor of Education in the Department of Education, University of Western Australia, at the time of the conference and is currently Chairman, Commonwealth Schools Commission, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.

RORY TREWEEKE is Federal President, Isolated Children's and Parents' Association, Angledool Station, via Walgett, New South Wales, Australia.

RICHARD WHITFIELD is Professor of Education and Head of the Department of Education Inquiry, University of Aston, Birmingham, U.K.

PAMELA E. YOUNG is a Lecturer in Administration at the Institute of Education in The London University, U.K.

PART ONE

Introduction

It is fortunate that this collection of papers can be introduced with the splendid contribution by Professor Richard Whitfield. To bring a somewhat disparate collection of papers under the umbrella of a unifying theme or philosophy is a difficult condition to achieve even when planned in advance. However, Professor Whitfield's paper 'Education and Local Development', does this for this volume of selected papers as well as it did for the conference when it was given as the initial lead address.

Professor Whitfield makes the case that benefits will accrue to community and individual learners when rural education is widened beyond its present limits. By widening limits it is meant that programs should be more open and permeable, school facilities more available and the scope of clients served extended to include all age groups. By making rural education more flexible, a theme that pervades many of the papers that follow, it can be expected that rural schools will become more rewarding, more germane to life in rural communities and make more attractive the prospects of individuals remaining in rural communities into adult life.

PART ONE

Introduction

Education and Local Development

RICHARD WHITFIELD

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Education and Local Development

There is growing contemporary interest in rural issues internationally among the economically and industrially advanced nations as a result of our need to guarantee the future productivity of primary foodstuffs and essential raw materials, the energy crisis, and the likely problems of greatly increased unemployment, particularly among the young. Not least within the concern is a questioning of our basic life styles, conditioned as they are for many by the trappings of advanced industrial society, in which the lures of unabating economic growth and urbanised consumerism may have subtly displaced possibly more humane values enshrined in ideal images of rural and family life. While recognising the temptation to romanticise these images within the hurly burly of so-called 'developed' cultures, through nostalgic reflections upon the peaceful pleasures, though not the pains, of the past, it is now clear that any expansion of rural education in the future is not to be chiefly the province and concern of the developing countries. It concerns every country, for demographic patterns and geographical features give rise to rural and isolated regions in all, regardless of size.

From our albeit limited understanding of the issues, it now seems apparent that the styles and patterns of provision of education in rural areas have important consequences not simply for children, their families and teachers, but also for the communities as a whole in terms of their viability economically, socially and culturally. It is always a mistake to perceive formal educational provision in isolation from its wider social and economic contexts, and nowhere is this principle more starkly illustrated than in relatively sparsely populated areas, as I am sure our conference will reflect many times over. There remains, however, much interdisciplinary policy-relevant research to be carried out.

It is not my task to describe and discuss our work at the University of Aston on the social effects of rural primary school reorganisation in England, for there will be later opportunities for that, but I conjecture that one of the reasons why the Western Australian Department of Education has done our Aston team the honour of inviting me to give this first formal conference address is that in our work, somewhat uniquely, we are endeavouring to look at rural schools from a wide interdisciplinary perspective as units of resource in communities as a whole. Whilst the explicitly educational functions and problems of rural schools are of fundamental concern to us, the perception of them by those living in rural communities, including those beyond the childbearing phase, and their inter-relation with other services and amenities, from post offices to unemployment, and public transport to playing fields are also being considered in our studies. The two-way inter-play between 'education' and 'local development' (ELD) in rural areas is thus a necessary conceptual and practical component of our work.

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Conceptual Background

Although the OECD/CERI Secretariat has over the past year issued several working documents on ELD (though not confined to rural contexts), I intend to develop a somewhat more personal view of this topic.

Education is concerned with the teaching and learning of socially valued knowledge and skills, and with the development of attitudes in *any* context—at school or college, at work, at play and, not least, in the home and community environment. Through the progressive institutionalisation of the educational process over the past century in the developed world, we have tended to blinker our perception of when education is taking place. However, the activities of teaching and learning cannot, fortunately, be circumscribed by professionals. Parents, relations, neighbours, brothers and sisters are any child's first teachers, and they remain a most valuable and low cost educational resource which any formal education service ignores at its peril. Of course, before we provided schools and the like, these people were the child's only teachers.

Familial intimacy and cohesion, or natural neighbourliness in a community, have potentially large effects upon intellectual development and formal educational performance. The effects of environment upon human development are both varied and cumulative. Since homes, schools and other community influences may be mutually supportive, lacking in common direction, or frankly antagonistic, it is vital that formal educational provision in any locality takes note of all the 'external' environmental factors which significantly affect students' lives. As far as the curriculum is concerned that means, ideally, that it should initially mould itself around the students' existing environments, and then grow out from those contexts in directions which are compatible with *both* community and professional values. It seems likely that those values need to be defined after a great deal more genuine dialogue between educators and the communities which they serve than hitherto if conflicts, exposed or, more often, hidden, are to be avoided.

Any difficulties here encountered in defining 'education' for the purposes of this address (and my account has necessarily been brief) seem considerably less than those surrounding the concept of 'local development'. On the other hand we do not have a neat and tidy description of what constitutes a locality or a community with a country or region, while on the other, 'development' can take many forms.

Taking *development* first, it implies change rather than ossification, and a dynamic rather than a static situation. It implies a move to a more desirable state of affairs. There has been a conventional association between development and economic growth which is not only a blinkered over-simplification, but misleading, since social values and life styles consequent from a growth economy are frequently omitted from consideration. Materialism, the incautious rape of the environment, and upward social mobility for, inevitably, a minority anxious for or able to acquire power and status tend to be the products of a proportional development/economic growth equation. If a society is developing we must include attention to employment patterns, to poverty and resource distribution, to opportunities to learn, to nutrition and to health, both physical and mental, as well as to economic indicators. We must

not confuse the essential economic scaffolding of society with the 'life buildings' which governments and industries create for people. Development must ultimately be accounted in human terms, in the personal knowledge, skills and socialisation of people, developed through formal and informal teaching and learning.

This broader, multiple index view of the concept of development, when taken with the apparent inability of economic growth in democracies to prevent a surplus of labour, suggests that educational expenditure needs to be seen as having a broader social welfare rather than simply instructional focus. Well before the end of this century it seems very likely that the stresses of intense urbanisation will require us to redirect some expenditure towards the needs of rural areas, towards new production possibilities within them, and towards the provision of services for increasing numbers of people who will wish to live there. In the Western Australian context, this may seem far-fetched, as the magnetic attractions of the Perth area continue unabated, despite urban sprawl and problems of commuting to employment from home, and as technological innovation only very slowly makes human life viable to the far north and east. But decentralisation is ultimately a question of values, and such values sincerely held can usually lead to action and the necessary advance economic investment. Some programs of decentralisation regrettably turn out only to be cosmetic in their impact.

When we examine the idea of a *locality* or community from an educational perspective, it is best viewed in terms of social relationships and interdependencies rather than through geographical features. These human interdependencies are reflected in the array of services which are thought important in promoting desired styles of living.

Among the services which we have come to regard as being desirable within rural communities are: road system and vehicle maintenance facility; some form of public or co-operative transport; telephone and postal communications; at least one shop; medical and dental care; public surveillance; public library provision, mobile or otherwise; a school with opportunities for adults as well as children to take classes; and indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. Within this spectrum of services, we have tended to regard the specifically educational facilities simply as being responsive to essentially pre-existing socio-economic frameworks, and this perception is basically little different from the service approach of health care.

It perhaps takes a somewhat bold step of imagination for educators, with our tendency towards academic insulation, to view school facilities and services as an important means for directly prompting local development, including economic and labour market development, rather than as merely reacting to it. But that vision may be our greatest need for the future; at least it seems understandable as we look at the functioning and needs of relatively isolated communities. For example, the closure of a village school, consequent upon a lack of rural employment opportunities for men and women of childrearing age, seems likely to be a further landmark in the spiral decline or the viability of that community. We have not yet worked out how, with appropriate changes in the education offered, the school facilities might be used more aggressively to reverse rural decline.

Phases of Educational Development in Relation to Rural Areas

We know that the problems of rural education vary from country to country, and within different regions of the same country, even ones so small as England or Scotland. Hence, it is not easy to select generally applicable features. The kinds of educational administration and curricula developed however both depend upon differences in:

1. the type of national government: from democratic to totalitarian;
2. the nature of the educational system: from centralised to decentralised;
3. the stage of national economic development: from agricultural (primary production) to industrialised (manufacture and trade).

With regard to 3, we have come to expect that the 'natural' development of nations is to move at different rates from pastoral agronomy through mechanised agriculture to industrial manufacture. This developmental mode is based simply on a model of economic growth expressed in cash terms. However, with the failure growth in national economies to prevent an increasing labour surplus, partly through technological innovation, the wisdom of such progression might now be fundamentally questioned for many countries.

This pattern of economic development has naturally had implications for the history of educational systems. Four principal phases in their development may be identified:

1. Achievement of a basic level of literacy for children and at least some employed adults.
2. Improvement of levels of agricultural productivity, the diversification of crops, and the improvement of hygiene using vocationally oriented curricula in agriculture and home economics through the emergence of post-primary technical schools and extension classes; this phase marks the end of peasant farming.
3. Diversification of industries and continuing drift of populations from the land towards concentrated settlements, accompanied by stratification of the educational system and the emergence of post-primary education for all.
4. More widespread industrialisation and attempts to achieve a balanced economy; in this phase, primary and secondary education become almost entirely non-vocational, concentrating on cultural, social and liberal aims, nursery, post-secondary technical and higher education expand, while rural schools adopt the patterns of the urban schools save for their generally smaller sizes and, perhaps if they are fortunate, the unique use made of the local environment for curricular activities.

Through each of these phases educational systems themselves are based upon a growth model with an expansion of many facets of a new and increasingly expensive professional infrastucture—for example, teachers, advisers, inspectors, administrators, examiners, curriculum developers, and even professors of education.

A New Phase of Contraction

However a new fifth phase is now emerging within a number of the developed nations, including I believe Australia and certainly the United Kingdom—that of *contraction*. Education, as traditionally practised at least, is being squeezed for several reasons. An obvious one is the declining birth rate in many countries as young couples develop new patterns of living as a result of improved contraceptive methods. Some of the other reasons are purely local in origin, yet several relate to structural features in our society which education, perhaps unfairly, is perceived not to have helped to overcome. Of these, unemployment, even of the educated, is one, social instability in the basic building blocks of society-ordinary families, is another, pockets of poverty a third, and failures in individuals' monitoring of their basic nutrition and health care, which has later social costs, is perhaps a fourth. In addition the concentration upon expansion by educators over a century had deflected us from giving sufficient emphasis towards educational *change*, with the result that the contemporary products of educational systems frequently lack the personal characteristics, abilities and skills which seem necessary for them to make an appropriate contribution within the complexities of a rapidly changing industrial society.

Although since the early 1960s we have put a great deal of effort into curriculum development and innovation, though principally from urban perspectives, its uptake within the majority of classrooms has been disappointing. The conservatism and relative social isolation of teachers is perhaps partly responsible for this, but, more fundamentally, we have assumed that curriculum development was principally a matter of syllabus, textbook and audio-visual resource improvement, rather than teacher development. Now we are beginning to realise that our greatest problems, over the next decade or two at least, relate to the management of educational innovation with a relatively static, ageing and probably declining, teacher workforce, during a period in which the more articulate and aware communities will be making increasing and possibly unrealistic demands upon the services provided. In this situation the specific needs of teachers working in rural locations may not be fully considered if urbanised assumptions are allowed to dominate the long-term thinking.

Within a contracting phase for education of course, whether through a declining birth rate (25 per cent during the 1970s in Britain) or other factors, the small school is particularly vulnerable, since it is proportionately that much more sensitive to population changes than the large school. While closure and consolidation arrangements may be relatively easily handled in metropolitan areas, they present tremendous problems, not least at the ethical level, in rural areas. Yet in most economically advanced countries, rural schools are still being closed. In Finland for example, notwithstanding the fact that a two-teacher school with only twelve pupils is still regarded as viable, there have been 2000 primary school closures over the past twenty years, representing one third of primary schools as a whole. In England the same period has seen an equivalent proportion of primary schools with under 100 children on roll subject to closure. In Western Australia eighty-eight rural primary schools have been closed since 1961, despite a generous attitude by the Department of Education compared with other countries. Many schools still contend with insecuri-

ties regarding closure as they watch local population movements, the baby birth barometer and the fortunes of local industries and services.

The social, educational and economic effects of closure and consolidation policies have hardly begun to be charted, and decisions have tended to be made chiefly by educators on an ad hoc basis and in relative isolation from other governmental and community agencies. The questions of unit costs of instruction and the scope of the curriculum seem to have featured highly in decisions about viability in many cases, and while many educational administrators have sought to examine each closure on its individual educational merits, wider socio-economic considerations seem to have been rare. But each closure results in some children being more distanced from their home location with the consequent extra difficulty of promoting genuine dialogue and participation between home and school, among many others.

Despite a willingness of central and regional governments to bear, at least to a degree, the higher increased instructional costs per student place in rural areas, compared with urban areas (an average of about double in the United Kingdom at the primary level), it seems likely that if conventional instuctional provision for the young remains the prime consideration, further rural school closures and consolidations will take place in many countries. However the rates of closure must decline due to there already being far fewer rural schools than hitherto. But it must be recognised that neither school closure, nor its wider socio-economic consequences are easily reversed. Hence there is an urgent need to reconsider policy in a fundamentally wider framework of accounting. But this does not mean that educationists can meanwhile complacently sit back and assume that traditional curricular offerings, their justification, content, method and administration, will suffice.

Widened Activities for the Rural School

The maintenance of many rural schools by the community seems likely in the future to depend upon widening their activities beyond the perhaps blinkered traditions of primary and secondary education. That may be made easier by redesignating them as 'Community Education Centres'. Any such widening of scope of rural schools must inevitably widen the role, and increase the responsibilities, social maturity and professional skills required of rurally-based teachers; and that presents daunting tasks not only for those who train them, but also for those who select them for service and provide support facilities. The rural school teacher already needs to be a better-than-average teacher, even in terms of traditional instruction. In Australia there may be a tendency to expect too much too soon in the career of the young teacher working in relatively isolated locations, despite the support provided by advisory staffs.

What might then be a possible widened scenario of the rural school or education centre's activities? Here I can only supplement ideas from the literature on rural community education which goes back to the pioneering ideas of Henry Morris in Cambridgeshire in the early 1930s.

Firstly, schools must become more genuinely open and permeable. Parents, teachers and other adults in the community must develop a greater and non-

threatening understanding of each other's roles in local development. Research has shown that greater interaction between primary schools and their environments is positively related to school achievement, independently of the socio-economic status of the school and many aspects of its internal organisation. In other words, involvement of school with parents and community and vice versa, thereby promoting a greater total cohesiveness of intentions, attitudes and aims, benefits conventional educational performance. The curriculum should no longer therefore remain the secret preserve of teachers, but worked out in dialogue between them and the local community, yet properly informed by relevant wider external considerations at regional and national levels.

Secondly, means must be found for making the school buildings and their facilities generally available at times other than during lessons—in the evenings, at weekends and during school holidays—and not necessarily with a paid employee being in charge. This would assist in the extension of facilities to voluntary or assisted groups of all ages, to youth groups, book lending clubs, music and crafts groups, old people's groups, co-operatives, and part-time vocational training in life 'survival' skills, in agriculture or other relevant local industries. Such activities might fertilise the traditional school curriculum and assist its swifter adaptation to the daily needs of those living in rural environments. The teacher should not be perceived, for example, as the only person who can develop classroom displays and materials.

Thirdly, the widened rural school can have greater involvement at the pre-school level, from post-natal infant health care onwards. At the baby and toddler stage parents need support, and rates of child development, intellectually, socially and manipulatively can be startling if the child is given appropriate stimulation. Any such nursery level experience can help youngsters to adjust to later more formal learning, as well as ease some of the stresses of child care experienced by parents at home. In some areas school rolls have been effectively increased by adding children for pre-school familiarisation. This practice, which helps with one customary index of school viability, could with profit be relatively easily extended downwards to youngsters below the age of four or five. It is perhaps surprising that in Australia the primary school starting age is still usually six years.

Fourthly, the school or 'community education centre' should not be confined to its formal physical location, any more than an active church is a building. Kitchens, firesides, farm sheds and garages are all locations where education for local development can and does thrive, with or without professional help. But this is at risk if maturing adults incrementally lose their dignity and initiative through social and educational conditioning which prompts them to expect that some professional will assist them with every day's problems. Rural life can still foster a sturdy initiative and independence, but there are signs of apathy in some locations.

So one could go on, and regrettably the ideas are not really new. Indeed we may have closed some schools because of insufficient imagination within out total educational outreach and limited views of accountability. One of the tragic by-products of compulsory schooling has been to remove some self-esteem from families and communities, while giving the formal educational system many burdens for which it cannot be largely responsible. Education at any level can only function in an atmo-

sphere of respect, confidence and trust. In a nutshell, we have to some extent to demythologise the education system, develop imaginative methods of educational interaction, new networks of communication, and see teachers more as catalysts for people's self-development rather than simply as providers of academic competence and certification. The enormous residual faith in formal schooling as an instrument of social change needs to be tempered by the recognition of the family and community as at least equal contributors.

Difficulties and Dangers within Education for Local Development

It has to be recognised that changing perceptions of schools and their activities, no matter what their location, from both the 'inside' and the 'outside', is no easy task after a century of progressive conditioning and territorial task division. Reducing the family's and the community's direct dependence on the formalities of school, as well as teachers' views of themselves as *the* major guardians of learning will require political, as well as educational action.

Further decentralisation of many of our existing arrangements is implied, in order to give more real control, including financial discretion in some matters, to local communities. But inherent in that implication are two very real and related dangers. One is that idiosyncratic local development may effectively lead to national disintegration, while the other is that it may produce a deep-seated cultural dualism, and even hostility, between urban and rural populations. Too much of the literature on rural education blandly implies that centralist adminsitrators must inevitably become insensitive bureaucrats when considering the needs of rural areas, that curricular guidelines are fundamentally misconceived, and that, over night rural folk can take over completely the satisfactory management of their affairs without the assistance of metropolitan-based personnel. Rural advocacy, even in the hands of some academics, can become an uncritical cause with an almost 'religious' fervour which does little to solve the real issues.

Much has been written about the concept of equality of educational opportunity, and many recent educational reforms in many countries have endeavoured to remove some of the more obvious inequalities, especially regarding access to institutions. But equality of educational opportunity, in essence, can only be evaluated by curricular means, in terms of access to experience, whether at home, in community or at school. Hence there is more than a little risk that purely local developments in education may accentuate differences between communities at the expense of their commonalities. We must recognise that there are historical and perhaps even genetical or theological limits to cultural pluralism which must be recognised if communities, regions and nations are to maintain some cohesion through shared concepts and experience. The polarisation of differences, whether between the fit and the handicapped, between male and female, between black and white, between life in the factory and life on the land, between the urban and the rural, without complementary stress upon what is common to each, is a receipe for intolerance, misunderstanding and conflict. Hence representatives of different kinds of communities within a state or nation should, in my view, remain guardians of curriculum frame-

works which will ensure a measure of equality without prescribing details of local implementation. A curriculum constructed from purely local perspectives would be blinkered for both urban and rural children alike; indeed, to the extent that metropolitan children learn and experience little about rural life, they have deprivation, and, likely as not, reduced options and social mobility.

In the light of trends in youth unemployment the concept of equality now needs complementing by more equal chances of finding employment at the output stage of formal education. Equalities or compensations of input, in terms of facilities, staffing and curriculum are no longer sufficient. Indeed, beyond the stage of compulsory schooling, many youngsters are voting with their feet against extra formal education if they can obtain adequate employment; they perceive that extra study may not necessarily help them towards their personal goals. Educational provision, whether in expansions or maintenance, remains conditional upon economic and social opportunity. The present inclination of many countries to educate too large a proportion of youngsters for unemployment requires urgent action, for there is more than enough work available, especially in rural areas. Can it be justified to open, through education, children's windows on the world while leaving the door to a fulfilling contributory life to society through employment shut?

The Challenge to Educators

The future for education and for those employed within it looks somewhat bleak in relation to recent decades if we simply react to external market forces. Rather I believe we must become much more involved in the wider socio-economic and communal political debate. The moral and social values inherent in what we know about human development and the minimally permitting conditions which seem likely to promote individual adjustment and life satisfaction should be a central feature of that debate. Be assured that educators have something to contribute here; indeed we fail in our duty if we avoid these issues by retreating solely into the details of classroom practice—that haven of our personal insulation as teachers from the outside world. We must be concerned with our students' lives beyond the classroom. Educators of all persuasions and specialisms need to put their feet on the community's ground, involved with persons inside and outside the formal educational setting, without losing a vision of the stars. For the values of responsible personal development and autonomy are not guaranteed to survive in the political and economic world without influence from those who, from time to time, can stand back and reflect upon the fundamental directions and welfare of our country, state or region.

We know that technological development does not *have* to lead to intense urbanisation and centralisation. Education is neither a precondition nor a servant of local development; it is a crucial *concurrent* part of it. Accordingly, we ought to be planning it with far less isolation from its other relatives. It is no part of my intention to chide our efficient and gracious conference organisers, but next week Perth could see a similar conference on rural health services, the week after one on rural transportation, the week after that one on rural industries, followed by one on rural transportation, the week after that one on rural industries, followed by one on rural

postal and telephone services, and so on. The same could, and does, happen in the United Kingdom as each arm of government and academia do their own things in relative isolation. The folly of such piecemeal procedures is self-evident in sparsely populated areas.

We simply must make contacts between professionals of differing specialisms and develop administrative procedure which will harmonise the work of educational agencies with that of others relevant to local development. Such harmonisation will require the melting of some traditional empire boundaries. There is no reason why the education service should not take the first initiatives in this matter, accepting that the phase of a substantial direct link between education and individual 'upward' social mobility is over; that route has become saturated and subject to the principle of diminishing returns.

Let us accept the proposition that education is one important factor (among several), for good or for ill, in economic and social advance, as well as in subsequently derived job creation. If we can make education in rural areas strong and flexible it should assist in diversifying the local agricultural and mining economies through co-operative self-employment, small business, community services, transport, leisure activities and tourism. That would then expand the options available to rural youngsters to include a genuinely rewarding possibility of their remaining in their localities into adult life if they so wish. It would also generate new and attractive options for urban youth, some of whom may wish to leave the cities without enforcements characteristic of Orwellian visions or social engineering. However, we must not forget that political commitment and financial investment (ahead of 'returns'—depending upon how the economic sums are calculated) will be essential to realise such a vision.

Without doubt our conference will set new challenges for teachers, teacher trainers, and educational administrators and researchers. We will not be concerned simply with school problems traditionally conceived; and we will not be insulated within a safe educational huddle, for we have political, industrial, community and media representatives with us. Furthermore, we have the benefit of international perspectives upon common problems, even though, superficially, the contexts for their solution look markedly different. At the centre of our concern is far more than the provision of rural education. it is a range of issues which affect the quality of life of people wherever they live, both now and in the future.

PART TWO

The Rural Situation in General

How is rural education perceived in the various developed nations where it is now an object of study? What are considerations peculiar to 'rural' education, especially from the standpoint of equality and opportunity, that distinguish it from 'other' education? And what hope is there for rural schools in light of their pedagogical and organisational constraints and shortcomings? The papers in Part Two are representative of current thinking about the rural situation, provide answers, in part, to these questions by describing the nature of rural education today and they present some notions that give rise to speculation about the nature of rural schools in the future.

Thus, these papers, coming from distinctly different directions, combine to form a general picture of the status of rural education today in the so-called developed countries. Taken collectively, the three papers speak to the wide variety and complexity of issues in rural education and establish a sense of character for the rural situation in general.

PART TWO

The Rural Situation in General

Quality in the Absence of Quantity: Education in Sparsely Populated Areas of Developed Countries

CY MAXWELL

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Quality in the Absence of Quantity: Education in Sparsely Populated Areas of Developed Countries

One cannot avoid getting the impression from discussions about this conference that the theme is not merely rhetorical fluff or a catchy title. Rather, it is clear that new directions are, in fact, what participants here are actively seeking and it is encouraging that so much talent and energy are being directed toward appropriate and feasible future approaches to the issues and concerns of rural education. Other OECD countries are also seeking (and with increasing regularity finding) new directions for rural education. Indeed, discovering just how much exciting and useful work is going on in rural areas of OECD member countries has been one of the rewards and revelations of the earlier OECD/CERI Sparsely Populated Areas Project and its current Education and Local Development Project.

Before I review OECD's past and current work in rural education I should like to describe the organisation into which this work fits. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is based in Paris. Officially created in 1961, OECD can properly be seen as having started just after the Second World War when it was the agency directly responsible for administering the Marshall Plan for the economic recovery of Europe. Currently, the organisation is composed of twenty-four member countries, including those from all of Western Europe, Scandinavia, North America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. OECD's basic mission is first and foremost to help member governments promote economic growth, employment and improve standards of living and second, to help promote a sound world economy through international co-operation. Under the direction of the OECD Council of Ministers, the Secretary-General and specialised committees, the organisation is divided into a series of administrative directorates. For our purposes here, the most important of these is the Directorate for Social Affairs, Manpower and Education.

Attached to this directorate is a somewhat autonomous unit called the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). Created in 1968, CERI operates under the supervision of an independent Governing Board (on which each member country, including Australia, holds one seat). CERI's basic mandate has been to promote the development of co-operation among member countries in the field of educational research and innovation. Over the past eleven years, CERI has sponsored projects on a wide range of educational concerns and priorities, including recurrent education, educational technology, curriculum development, in-service education and teacher training, the management of higher education, the education of handicapped adolescents, and early childhood education.

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Our work in Australia, while involving co-operation with numerous institutions and agencies in various states, is overseen and co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Department of Education both through the Australian representative on the CERI Governing Board, Charles Beltz, and the OECD Advisory Committee on Education chaired by Harold Hughes.

It is within this context that, in 1976, CERI's Governing Board authorised the creation of the Basic Education and Teacher Support in Sparsely-Populated Areas (SPA) project. The project which officially concluded at the end of 1978 with a major conference in Aurillac, France (attended by Australian delegates from Western Australia and Victoria) will serve as the basis of a report containing case studies and policy recommendations to be released in 1980.[1] Growing out of this SPA project are not only a series of national follow-up exercises such as this one, but also the CERI Educational and Local Development project, about which I shall make a few comments later.

First, however, it might be useful to review certain background and underlying situations in OECD countries at the time the SPA Project was launched in order to define and describe the rationale which served as the basis for the work carried out.

Because all CERI projects are established in response to needs and priorities expressed by member countries, the most basic justification for work in the field of education in sparsely populated areas sprang from the increased focus on rural affairs within OECD countries themselves.

As might be expected, the causes of this renewed interest in the educational problems of distant and sparsely populated areas varied considerably from country to country. Nevertheless, there were sufficient common concerns and circumstances to justify the establishment of an international study within OECD auspices and while there were variations around the theme, there were, as well, prevailing trends and forces in OECD countries which prompted the study. First, there had been an alteration in the trend of rural to urban migration. Whether the result of unanticipated or deliberately planned population redistributions, the fact remained that the long-standing social phenomena of rural people moving to the cities had been significantly slowed and, in some cases, entirely reversed in OECD member countries.

The educational implications here are clear. If rural regions are able to retain a greater proportion of their indigenous population (and attract a modicum of new residents), then the rural school population will remain as a significant education constituency in most member countries; will no longer be viewed as a declining educational sector; and will have the political basis for seeking increased governmental attention and assistance.

A second prevailing trend or social force concerned the pressure against centralisation and standardisation in education and other governmental services. Recent years have witnessed the evolution of a variety of social and educational forces which have strenuously, and often successfully, asserted the rights of a particular region, locality or constituency. The basic thread uniting these various forces is a

[1] Now published as an OECD/CERI report entitled *Rural Education in Urbanized Nations: Issues and Innovations*, edited by Jonathan P. Sher, printed by Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1981.

very positive attitude towards local/regional/traditional characteristics and qualities coupled with an aversion to any standardisation or 'homogenisation' of society and its various components.

A third underlying force was based on a dissatisfaction with conventional solutions to the educational problems of rural and sparsely populated areas. Rural parents, local educators, and government officials alike were beginning to express strong reservations about the benefits and utility of standard responses to long-standing rural education problems. Two policies, in particular, had been rather severely scrutinised. One was the policy of closing down small rural schools and bussing children long distances to larger town or area schools. The other is the policy of boarding rural children outside their own community in order for them to attend school.

A fourth movement reflected a renewed respect for rural educational models. After years of being routinely assailed by educators and policy-makers for being 'backward', 'overly conservative' and 'inadequate', rural schools were beginning to receive a measure of praise for the qualities they do possess. This is not to suggest that their very real shortcomings had either ceased to exist or were being overlooked. Rather, the point here is that within both the rural community and the education profession in OECD member countries there was a growing respect for what schools in sparsely populated areas have and an appreciation for where they succeed.

Among these values of rural schools and the contributions their traditional practices have made to education those which were receiving greatest recognition were:

1. the role of the rural school as a primary source of community pride, identity and stability in its setting;
2. the informal, familial environment which exists in many (though by no means all) small rural schools;
3. the relative success of rural schools in teaching the so-called 'basics';
4. the historic role of schools in sparsely populated areas as natural laboratories for such 'innovative' educational practices as individualised instruction, cross-age grouping, older students teaching younger students, using the community as a learning resource, and 'mainstreaming' mildly handicapped children;
5. concerns about equal educational opportunity which have emerged over recent years; and
6. the recent preoccupation with equity, generally, and aid to disadvantaged populations in particular.

In part, OECD's interest in rural schools was the predictable consequence of the fact that a disproportionately high percentage of poor and other disadvantaged populations are found in sparsely populated areas. Yet, these concerns also sprang from a more sophisticated understanding that inequality of educational opportunity occurs not only on the basis of income, class, race and sex, but also on the basis of place of residence. Obviously, any continuing denial of educational equity (however defined) occurring simply as the result of where a particular child happens to live (be it the

inner city or a remote rural settlement) severely hampers any country's attempts to achieve genuine educational equity for all its children.

Armed with this set of justifications and rationale, the SPA project began its work—held international meetings, collected baseline data, and supervised the production of fourteen case studies from eleven member countries: Australia, Finland, France, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

After more than two years of work, the project arrived at fifteen basic conclusions which we feel have international relevance and, although it is obvious that some of these will have more relevance than others in any given national setting, it was fascinating to see how much commonality really does exist across national lines.

These conclusions are a major element of the forthcoming OECD report,[2] so I shall not attempt detailed comments on each one here. However, I should point out that the order in which they are listed has no significance and it does not reflect any priority or ranking as far as we are concerned.

> There is no single definition of 'rural' or 'sparsely populated' education which is meaningful in an international context.

Diversity is a central characteristic of rural communities both within and among participating countries in the study. Given the enormous range of communities, people and circumstances which are present in the sparsely populated regions of OECD countries, the precise meaning of 'ruralness' can be rather elusive. We know, of course, that rural communities are characterised by small populations and low population density ratios. However, since 'rural' and 'sparsely populated' are relative terms, all population and density-based definitions are suggestive rather than absolute. A 'sparsely populated' area in the English context implies something quite different than areas given the same label in Norway or Australia. Similarly, a rural school which would be considered small by U.S. standards would be rather large in the context of rural Finland. The point here is simply that 'ruralness', like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder. Therefore, each country's conception of the meaning of 'rural' or 'sparsely populated' must be respected and attempts to impose a more global definition discouraged.

> The provision of primary-level basic education in rural areas is no longer a major problem in OECD member countries.

This is not to imply that small rural primary schools are without very real difficulties which need to be resolved. There continues to be ample room for improvement in most rural primary schools and educational authorities should help foster such improvement wherever possible and appropriate. Rather, the point here is that, with rare exceptions, adequate opportunities to receive a basic primary level education in sparsely populated areas are available in member countries of OECD.

> The provision of secondary level education in sparsely populated areas continues to be a major problem.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

The problem of access to secondary level educational opportunities, although diminishing, is still a significant issue (particularly in poorer OECD member countries). Yet, there are two other major concerns which were prevalent in some countries which participated in the study. These were:

1. the quality of rural secondary schooling (particularly as reflected in the breadth and depth of curricular offerings and other educational opportunities) is still not consistently high; and
2. the inappropriateness of some secondary level programs (particularly in vocational education) and the shortcomings of conventional strategies (for example, centralised facilities, boarding arrangements and/or long bus rides) for the delivery of rural secondary education are becoming increasingly apparent.

Effective equality of educational opportunity often does not exist for special need populations in rural areas.

Although significant strides have been made in recent years to improve the educational opportunities available to all rural students, the quality and appropriateness of opportunities available to some key rural populations continue to be deficient. The groups most frequently cited as being either under served or poorly served were: the children of indigenous (or native) populations in sparsely populated areas; the children of migrant agricultural workers; girls and young women in rural areas; gifted and talented children; and handicapped children.

Rural teacher training and support mechanisms have been significantly improved in recent years.

The era in which teachers working in sparsely populated areas were involuntarily isolated from sources of information and assistance has largely passed in member countries. However, there was ample evidence presented in the study which indicates the need to create and/or expand both pre-service and in-service teacher training which is directly and specifically tailored to the needs and concerns of rural teachers.

The ability of rural schools to attract and retain competent teachers can only be partially influenced by policy makers.

Whether competent teachers come to and remain in sparsely populated areas is still largely a function of the teacher supply/demand ratio in a given country at a given time. Rural schools tend to be the prime beneficiaries of periods of teacher oversupply and the hardest hit during periods of teacher shortages. Another key determinant of teacher distribution is the attitude toward rural schools held both by the education profession and society as a whole in a given country. The willingness of competent teachers to accept rural posts is likely to be far greater when such posts are widely regarded as desirable than when rural assignments are viewed as a personal and professional dead end.

Despite these realities, there are certain concrete measures which authorities can implement to improve teacher distribution:

1. ensure that equal economic and professional opportunities exist for rural teachers;
2. begin an active effort to identify and recruit individuals aspiring to be rural teachers;
3. arrange for a greater proportion of student teachers to practice teach in rural settings; and
4. improve the quality, availability and appropriateness of rural in-service education opportunities.

Reforms which intentionally or unwittingly serve to 'urbanise' rural education are likely to have negative effects.

In case after case, it can be demonstrated that the educational programs and curricula, reform strategies, and organisational arrangements originally designed for and utilised by school systems in metropolitan areas are inappropriate in rural settings and are rarely replicated successfully by rural schools. Clearly there is a pressing need to develop rural schools which reflect and build upon the unique opportunities and natural advantages inherent to them and their communities. Thus, rural schools could incorporate:

1. strong foundation in the teaching of basic skills and essential facts;
2. emphasis on practical skills and learning by doing;
3. training in self-directed study and the development of initiative;
4. focus on the local rural community;
5. commitment to familiarising students with the outside world; and
6. emphasis on the options available to rural young people both within and beyond the local community.

The linkages between schools and communities in sparsely populated areas should be expanded and the bonds between them strengthened.

Schools have been (and continue to be) absolutely vital as community institutions (as well as educational ones) in rural areas. Policies and reforms which restrict the linkages or weaken the bonds between the school and the community are highly counter-productive. In rural areas, schools need the community to supplement and extend their efforts while the community needs the school both as a source of community identity and as a reinforcement of the community's child-rearing practices. This active interdependence between community and school is one of the key attributes of rural education. Reforms which sacrifice this relationship have a markedly detrimental effect on all parties concerned.

Student achievement in rural schools does not appear to fall significantly below that of urban students.

Two qualifications must immediately be added to this conclusion: first, comprehensive and reliable data on the issue of student achievement was generally limited in the participating countries and missing altogether in some; and second, 'average' levels of student achievement in both urban and rural areas fall well below desired

levels. Still, there was general agreement (and a few pieces of supporting evidence) that once the effects of I.Q. and social-economic status have been controlled, there are few major differences between urban and rural students in terms of academic achievement.

There are relatively high costs inherent in the delivery of needed educational services in sparsely populated areas.

The reality of high per pupil expenditures in rural schools (offering an adequate program) has not changed in recent years. Further, these costs are equally visible in centralised as well as decentralised rural schools and in alternative rural delivery systems as well as traditional ones. Population sparsity ensures that rural districts will have relatively high per pupil costs for transportation, specialised programs and services, administrative overhead, energy, equipment and materials, and the maintenance and construction of school facilities. There are certain minimum fixed costs which schools must bear regardless of their enrolment. Having fewer students over which to spread these costs inevitably means that the per pupil cost will be higher in rural schools. Thus, higher costs which arise as a consequence of this sparsity must be regarded as one of the economic facts of rural life rather than as evidence of wastefulness (or as costs which can be erased by stricter expenditure controls).

Rural schools have been able to reduce their economic burden through the utilisation of strategies uniquely suited to the rural condition.

As previously noted, there are high costs associated with the delivery of rural educational services in nearly any circumstance. This has been true even when the programs and services offered are not extensive by urban standards. It is important, also, to note that the costs of providing exactly the same programs materials, services and resources in rural schools (as are commonly found in urban schools) would be so prohibitively high that even the wealthiest member countries would probably lack the necessary funds.

However, rural schools have been financially able to offer educational programs and services of at least reasonable breadth and quality by inaugurating such measures as:

1. sharing resources (human, material and financial) with other rural schools;
2. the utilisation of extensive parental assistance and in-kind contributions from the rural community;
3. hiring generalists who could perform multiple roles in the schools rather than hiring specialists;
4. promoting individualised instruction and independent study instead of extensive formal course offerings; and
5. simply 'doing without' sophisticated equipment and expensive facilities.

The rural education sector is likely to remain as a major constituency within the education system of member countries.

There are several trends and circumstances supporting this conclusion (some of which were noted earlier). These include an alteration of rural to urban migration trends; pressures against centralisation and standardisation in education; dissatisfaction with conventional solutions to the educational problems of rural areas; renewed respect for rural educational models; and concerns about equal educational opportunity. However, one should not lose sight of the more fundamental reality that millions of children are dependent upon rural schools and rural delivery systems for their education during the compulsory years of schooling. By all indications, this fact will not change dramatically in the foreseeable future.

> Little lasting and significant improvement in rural education will occur in the absence of explicit and appropriate governmental policies and assistance.

The primacy of local circumstance and the value of local initiative must, of course, be remembered and respected. Reform strategies which seek to circumvent local traditions, values and capabilities (rather than building on them) are not likely to succeed. Still, it is equally apparent that rural schools have been, are, and doubtless will continue to be both dependent on governmental assistance and subject to governmental regulation and/or control. Thus, the willingness and ability of educational authorities to exert leadership and act forcefully in ways which enhance and strengthen education within their sparsely populated areas will have a profound effect on the long-term development of rural children and rural communities.

> Innovations in the content and delivery of rural educational services are both necessary and feasible.

For years, the prevailing opinion in education was that rural communities and rural schools are so conservative and resistant to change that developing and supporting innovative educational strategies and programs were hardly worth the effort. The OECD project, particularly through the fourteen special reports previously described, provided a powerful refutation to this bit of conventional wisdom. In fact, there is considerable evidence that rural schools (once convinced of the merits of the proposed innovation) are remarkably able to implement new ideas and can serve as rather splendid laboratories for educational innovation.

> The current state of research, data collection, and information dissemination about rural education is not impressive and must be improved.

In an age when people are seriously concerned about 'information overloads' the paucity of reliable information and research on rural education is genuinely startling. In country after country, the most rudimentary data about rural schools, communities, students and teachers were simply not known and/or not available. We trust that much was learned through the efforts of the project, but one of the most lasting impressions on participants was the discovery of just how much more remains to be learned. Research, data collection and information dissemination about rural education must be expanded and upgraded if policy-makers are to have the evidence they need to make informed choices for the future.

These then are the basic findings of OECD's survey. As is normal in

OECD/CERI projects, follow-up work may take place within each member country under the auspices of that country's own local, state and national authorities or the outcomes of a project may lead to a follow-up as in CERI.

Within CERI itself, the current work in this field has taken a somewhat original turn, again based on the expressed needs and interests of member governments. Thus, the current thrust is on the relationship between education (both rural and urban) and local development. Based on the recommendations of a group of government officials and other rural experts from sixteen countries (including Australia) the rural component of the project will include programs of field-based seminars and case studies around four major themes:

1. School-based strategies for rural development.
2. Adult and community education in rural areas.
3. Strengthening education's role in major rural economic development efforts.
4. Educational and economic measures for minority and indigenous populations in rural areas.

We, at OECD, greatly appreciate the very active and important role which Australia, particularly Western Australia, has played in the past project. We hope not only that Western Australia will continue its strong involvement in the new effort but also that other Australian states will join in as well. We welcome your participation and the experience it would bring to the work.

In conclusion, I should like to comment on a point that is often raised in discussions of rural education. Put simply, the question is, given the inherent problems of rural education and the current financial constraints most countries are experiencing, are there grounds for optimism?

I should like to respond by recalling something that I recently read which defined an optimist as 'someone who believes that what we have now is the best of all possible worlds' and a pessimist as 'someone who's afraid that the optimist is right'! So my suggestion would be to be neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but rather a realist.

PART TWO

The Rural Situation in General

Equality and Opportunity in Rural Education

FRANK DARNELL

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Equality and Opportunity in Rural Education

Rural education is to a remarkable extent a common topic among educationists, social scientists, and the public-at-large of Australia. Indeed, the programs I have observed so far, and the publications I have seen, suggest that the subject of rural education has been advanced in Australia as much as anywhere in the world. The way rural education problems are described in the Western Australian publication, *Educational Provision in Sparsely Populated Areas of Western Australia*, to which I shall refer again, is a case in point. So if there is nothing else to be gained from my remarks, they may simply affirm the universality of the problems you endeavour to solve and to attest to the thoroughness which you appear to have employed in problem-solving.

Similarities between the Australian situation and situations I have observed elsewhere in the world, especially in the Arctic, are remarkable. Two quotations, the first from UNESCO and the other from Western Australia, illustrate this point.

> Living in the world's harshest climate, in a part of the earth visited by few travellers, the peoples of the Arctic regions exemplify the distinct and self-contained human grouping. For human beings, however, remoteness is not a matter of geography alone. The world contains many other groups as removed in various ways from the societies surrounding them as are the Arctic peoples. (Cairns, 1972, p. 335)

> [Problems] of isolation, community atmosphere and cultural heterogeneity, are the major ones facing educators of people in sparsely populated areas [in Australia]. (Education Department of Western Australia, 1979, p. 7)

Factors in rural education, such as vastness, remoteness, low population density, cultural diversity, extraordinary costs, inadequate political influence, and uncertain educational goals generate problems of the most vexing kind for practitioners and consumers alike, regardless of the specific area of the world in which these factors are found. Problems associated with rural conditions which are being experienced in Australia are problems that you share with others in many rural sectors of the world.

To be consistent with my topic, it is necessary to link the two terms, 'rural' and 'equality of opportunity', in such a way that they are seen as a single, composite topic. Much has been said about rural education; moreover, the concept of equalisation of educational opportunity has been examined from many points of view. But 'rural', because it is a comprehensive, nonspecific word, gives rise to many images when it is mentioned. It is necessary, therefore, to assign a meaning to the way I use the word 'rural' as well as to designate what I believe are the reasons for equalising educational opportunity in the rural context.

For most of us, 'rural' means a perception of various life styles and environmental

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settings. Our perceptions are apt to be the result of previous experiences, current preferences, and tendencies to draw stereotypes rather than a precise image, common to the public in general. What is perceived as an elegant situation by one person may be seen as less than elegant by another. What is provincial in style or thought to one may be cosmopolitan to someone else. There is no common definition, thus, as a means of focus on ruralism, I have divided rural residents into three types: those who are indigenous minorities; those who are country town or remote rural residents and rural itinerants; and neo-ruralists or urban expatriates.

The first category, indigenous minorities, are those people who 'belong' to a region and are considered to be the original people (as opposed to those who are settlers). Rather than live in urban settlements developed in recent times, they continue to live in aboriginal settings, often in remote and isolated areas.

The second category, isolated residents, may be divided into two sub-groups. The first of these consists of persons involved in different areas of primary industry who, through the dictates of isolation and occupation, form a network of regional agrarian societies. Because of its unique nature, the life style of this sub-group of rural residents is perceived by some urban dwellers as idyllic; by others as unattractive. The second sub-group consists of those people living away from urban areas because of work associated with natural resource development: for example, miners, foresters, fishermen, and construction workers. These people are seldom permanent rural residents at any one site, and frequently move between urban and rural settings, depending on where work is available. Both of these sub-groups give rise to service and supply personnel who then form the nucleus of rural communities.

People in the third category, neo-ruralists, are quite unlike any of the first two and in most cases their educational needs are not seen as being critical. These are the people with urban backgrounds, often engaged in urban employment, who have rejected metropolitan settings for their place of habitation. Worldwide, they are increasing in number as more people come to embrace an idealised rural life style and they make particular demands—at times hard to satisfy—on education systems. For our purposes, however, I have not considered neo-ruralist in this paper. They need to be acknowledged and their problems considered, but not in the context of this paper.

I am primarily concerned with the first two categories, especially those who historically have been denied equality of opportunity. Indigenous minorities, country residents and itinerants often have some characteristics in common, such as remoteness from some material and cultural elements of urban life. Frequently they both suffer from poverty, a condition they share with many who live in cities. Also a note of caution is in order when one pictures these two rural categories. Because of frequently held stereotypes of each, derived from conditions that may have prevailed in earlier times, inaccurate reflections of contemporary rural conditions are not uncommon. The nature of living conditions and subsequent social and educational needs of residents and indigenous minorities in rural areas have changed dramatically in recent years, especially with the advent of reliable small plane travel, electronic media, less interest in reliance on subsistence economies, and social breakdown in many aboriginal communities.

Our discussion on equality of education must start by delineating the various types of equality; and the question, 'What is the purpose of equality of educational opportunity for rural residents?', must be asked. Until fairly recent times inequality was accepted as the norm. Now, however 'The one universally accepted criterion of a public activity is that it affords equal treatment to all. With respect to schooling, this implies that any two children of the same abilities shall receive equivalent forms of assistance in developing these abilities . . .' (Benson 1961, p. 62). How to develop the means and find the resources to guarantee that this notion is reflected in policies affecting rural education is the essence of the problem we all need to consider. But before this problem can be approached with a sense of direction, it is necessary to sort out the various forms of equality of opportunity and agree on the forms most appropriate to the needs of rural residents. To derive a statement of equality of opportunity that is *rural specific*, I have selected for consideration eight concepts of equality of opportunity found in the literature on the subject.[1] These are:

1. the foundation system concept of equality of opportunity
2. the concept of minimum-attainment
3. the leveling concept
4. the concept of competition
5. the equal-dollars-per-pupil concept
6. the classification concept
7. the full-opportunity concept
8. the concept of fiscal neutrality.

All of these concepts have their complex features and all have been variously described by several authors. In a brief and general manner they may be described in the following ways.

The 'foundation system' concept requires a satisfactory minimum offering, expressed in money to be spent, which shall be guaranteed to each pupil. Many complex formulas have been derived to satisfy the feature of guarantee, but they are all based on the fundamental idea that certain minimums are essential for all, regardless of local resources. If local resources are inadequate they are increased by resources from elsewhere.

The 'minimum-attainment' concept of equality of opportunity requires that every student shall receive educational resources until he/she reaches a specified level of achievement. This approach requires greater expenditure for some students than for others.

The 'leveling' concept requires that resources should be allocated in inverse proportion to the ability of each student. In effect, this approach compensates for shortcomings of some pupils and is typically provided in categorical compensatory programs. The Australian Schools Commission adopts this approach in its Disadvantaged Schools Program.

The idea of 'competition' as an approach to equality of opportunity suggests

[1] In particular, I am indebted to Arthur Wise for his treatment of this subject in *Rich Schools, Poor Schools*, pp. 143-159.

distribution of educational resources to students according to their talent. In this definition, equality is an individual focus rather than a social focus. It simply means the more able students deserve more education, regardless of wealth or parents, ethnicity, or location.

Opposed to the 'leveling' and 'competition' concepts, the idea of 'equal-dollars-per-pupil' approach assumes there is no reason for one individual, rural or urban, gifted or handicapped, to be granted more resources than another. Ability is not considered a reason for differential allocation of funds.

The 'classification' definition derives from the concept that specific education programs are more suitable for students with certain specified characteristics than for students without such characteristics. Equality for all, but within a classification, is the difference between this and other concepts.

The concept of 'full-opportunity' assumes that students may differ in their ability to learn, and every person should be given opportunity to develop their abilities to the fullest. In this concept the cost of every individual's education would vary. There would be no cutoff of educational services until there is nothing more to be gained.

The concept of 'fiscal neutrality' requires that a student's education should not depend upon where he lives and what his parental circumstances are. Because of its 'should not' feature this concept is sometimes called the 'negative definition' of equality of educational opportunity. The difficulty with this particular definition is that it does not specify conditions necessary to assure equality, but it does suggest each child should be able to reach the limit of his abilities even though levels of expenditure will be different for various students. It applies without regard to the place where one lives and favours no individual or class.

Obviously, these definitions are not mutually exclusive and some contradict others. Each has merit for one particular reason or another, depending on circumstances or one's philosophical views. And that is the point of my listing them. They all need to be considered to develop a concept, or combination of concepts, that we can agree on as being the most appropriate to rural situations. Because there is no single definition for 'rural', and because rural environments encompass different kinds of populations, no one concept of equality of education is suitable. However, a composite definition, tailored to the rural environment, is worth an attempt. As an effort in this direction, I have derived a definition from half of the eight concepts just described that I feel fits the needs of settlers and indigenous minorities who heretofore have been denied equality of opportunity. It goes like this: Schools should provide the opportunity for every student to develop personal abilities to the fullest, regardless of the ability to learn, regardless of the ultimate level to be attained, regardless of where the student lives, and regardless of a person's parental circumstances. By formulating this definition of equality of opportunity, we must assume that the purpose of equality of opportunity for rural students is to ensure that they may develop their abilities regardless of the accidents of birth or geography. With this definition in mind, we can proceed to the problem of finding the means to accomplish this purpose.

To approach this problem on a positive note, it is my contention that even though educational offerings will be expensive and demanding on energies, students can be

afforded, without rancour, substantially different educational programs for reasons of differences in where they live, differences in economic status, and differences in ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It is axiomatic that 'to offer students of different ability [and circumstances] similar amounts of resources, may, in fact, be to treat them unequally' (Wise, p. 156).

I have raised this point to review, set a tone, and to provide a platform from which to make some suggestions. And, in furtherance of this purpose, I would like to quote from the recent report on rural education of the Department of Education of Western Australia, mentioned earlier in this paper:

> The achievements of the department [in rural education] are indicative of the State's commitment to eliminate, or reduce as far as possible, any educational disadvantage that might be derived from living away from the urban and larger town centres (Education Department of Western Australia, 1979, p. 31).

From what I have seen and heard so far, I must agree that this conclusion is correct. There is obvious evidence of genuine concern and sensitive attitudes toward the needs of rural students as reflected in the policies and programs of the department. Achievements are considerable in number and impressive in content. From the material written it is evident that policies and programs of the school system have been established for the purpose of realising equality of opportunity.

However, regardless of the positive things being done, generous expenditures of money, and the favourable attitude toward solving rural problems, misgivings about standards in rural education are nonetheless heard here—as elsewhere in the world. Low levels of educational achievement in rural areas, especially among the Aboriginal populations, persist and there is evidence that socially related problems of many rural groups continue to worsen. The Fitzgerald report, *Poverty and Education in Australia*, describes these conditions, but I must emphasise there are similar reports describing similar conditions in every country with which I am acquainted. Other reports have expressed doubts about the adequacy of curricula in some rural schools in Australia. 'It is suggested that factors, such as the physical and social environments of the rural schools, combined with relatively high turnover of staff, teacher inexperience, resource shortages, and isolation contribute to unsatisfactory curriculum adaptation and implementation' (Education Department of Western Australia, 1979, p. 13). This particular comment could be found almost verbatim in reports describing education in rural areas in the United States, Arctic Canada, Greenland and Scandinavia; especially aptly described by this statement is education in the 150 rural villages of Alaska.

With growing concern for even better programs, support generous, and the efforts presently underway considered right by most of us, what are we doing wrong? What is being done that we believe to be right but must not be? What is not being done that should be done? Why a call for 'new directions in rural education'? If there were simple answers to these questions, I think we would have found them, seized upon them, and immediately reduced the shortcomings we know to exist. There is little doubt that professionals in the field strive toward reducing shortcomings, and governmental policies are formulated in recognition of the principle of equality of opportunity. But shortcomings and frustrations persist.

Why are there no obvious answers to my questions? I believe that we must look for inconsistencies in the most fundamental way we think and go about our work. Rather than consider the dilemma by looking for basic fallacies in our approach, the exact opposite approach is typical: we develop most sophisticated technology; we look for more complex psychological implications in individual behaviour; we set forth more intricate social theory to explain relationships. We grow more isolated in our particular specialisations. I am not critical of these efforts, *per se*; but I believe we have grown so specialised, our resources have become so many and our efforts so numerous, we have lost sight of the whole. If those things we consider to be inadequate can be improved through simple or fundamental explanations, such explanations are apt to be overlooked or rejected because of that simplicity.

To make this point more realistic and to appear less suppositional, I shall use two examples to illustrate what I mean by fundamental explanations. I have chosen one example from Western Australia, a precarious undertaking for a neophyte. The other comes from Alaska—where my experience puts me on firmer ground. They are not cited to find fault; instead, they are pointed out as representative of similar examples which may be observed in many areas of the world.

The section I cited from the report on *Educational Provision in Sparsely Populated Areas in Western Australia* appears to contain what I believe to be an example of a fundamental kind of error we all have been caught in, viz., our perception, as urban residents, of what is best for rural students. The key to recognising that we have been coming from the wrong direction is found in the phrase '*reduce* as far as possible, any educational *disadvantage* that might be derived from living away from the urban and larger town centres'. I emphasise the words 'reduce' and 'disadvantage'. But let me explain further why I have stressed 'reduce' and 'disadvantage'. When I was defining 'rural' I made a point to balance value terms ascribed to the rural condition in an attempt to avoid the universal tendency of urbanites to unconsciously ascribe a negative value to rural life. The point I am trying to make is this: some of the solutions to the shortcomings we all acknowledge exist in rural areas can be overcome by a simple, but fundamental, change in the direction we have been coming from. Because of our notions of stereotypical rural residents, we often assume the urban model to be the preferred model to which all people aspire. What would we do differently as educationists if the phrase is changed to read '*amplify* as far as possible, any educational *advantage* that might be derived from living away from the urban and large town centres'.

Now let me leave this example for a moment and go to another, but one based on the same fundamental error in the way we oftentimes direct our efforts. In rural Alaska, primarily populated by the indigenous Eskimo, Aleut, and Indian peoples of North America, it has been concluded that much of the slowness of educational reform in their villages could be attributed to the need for decentralisation of authority in favour of local control. The problem for years in Alaska was failure to understand the fundamental difference between perceptions of control or autonomy by central governmental agencies (the urban view) and the way control of schools was perceived by residents in rural villages. Central, urban-based agencies agreed that authority might be allocated to local peoples, but decentralisation as an

ultimate granting of autonomy was seen as a *tendency*, while rural consumers of educational services perceived it as an *event*. The two different interpretations led to qualitatively different activities desired over long periods of time. Decentralisation as a *tendency* connotes an 'allowance' of greater control bestowed upon the consumer at the pleasure of the parent agency. Decentralisation as an *event* connotes arrival at a specific state. The event has a defined end and a planned beginning, but the tendency has a defined beginning with no specific end other than to find that point where consumer pressure to decentralise is reduced. The granting of autonomy outright, as contrasted with the award of it in increments of indefinite size and duration, results in a different relationship between central and local rural areas. As in Western Australia, it is a matter of the fundamental direction from which we come. In this case, it is the value we attribute to the ability of local people to make intelligent choices. School programs developed under one perception of intellectual ability are apt to be substantially different from programs developed under the other. What would have been the levels of educational achievement of the indigenous Alaskans today if earlier programs of education had been developed *with* rather than *for* them?

By use of these examples, I am not suggesting that the amenities of urban life be disregarded when rural programs are developed or that responsibilities for education be abandoned at the central level. There remain in rural areas technical inadequacy, personnel underdevelopment, insufficient resources, power inequity, economic underdevelopment, and functional isolation of social services that can only be improved in partnership with professional workers. Also, a rural emphasis or point of view does not necessarily mean there are not some common norms toward which all school systems should strive (Nachtigal, 1978). And professional educators must be able to determine the cognitive, affective, and motor needs of each student to such an extent that programs of education, professional staffs, and other resources are sufficient to meet such needs—an awesome task I might add and a capability we have yet to achieve. Thus, I speak to the need for a partnership between local residents with their particular rural perspective and intuition for what is needed and professionals trained to recognise the means by which objectives of education may be met. Concerns expressed by local people may be looked upon as essential elements necessary for substantive change; ways for their perception to influence programs must be brought to bear on new programs that may be enhanced by a growing bank of academic and research skills increasingly being set forth by the professional community. To realise what I suggest, ways need to be found to bring the perceptions of rural residents together with the skills of the professionals. Such a merger has the potential to eliminate the frustrations of both groups.

As a means to conclude this address, I should like to return to the notion I expressed earlier, the need to combine the two topics, equality of opportunity and ruralness, into one fairly composite thought. To quote once again from the first report in the Studies in Rural Education Series published by the Education Department of Western Australia, 'The record of the Education Department in this area [rural schools] is impressive, especially after taking into account the special problems that can be attributed to the sheer size of the jurisdiction over which it has

administrative responsibility'. I am sure it would be hard for anyone to quarrel with this statement. Most importantly, it appears that the essential criterion for success in this field is being observed, that is, concern that the education received by rural residents corresponds to their interest, norms and values. But also, it is necessary to be aware that:

> Equality is rarely given to any group, it is achieved through the stirrings of the group itself. And in doing so, it is essential that a group is capable of defining what equality means in its own terms. Its ability to do this, in fact, is probably the best measure of the degree of equality it has achieved. (Eide, 1979, p. 12)

The link between ruralness and equality and opportunity lies in the phrase, 'it is essential that a group is capable of defining what equality means in its own terms'.

The extensive interest now being shown around the world in improved education for rural people is indicative of the extent to which the concept of equality of opportunity has become a fixture of contemporary social thought. In 1966, Francis Keppel, at the time U.S. Commissioner of Education, observed that in education 'the first revolution . . . was a revolution in *quantity*. Everyone was to be provided the chance for an education of some sort. That revolution is almost won in the schools . . . . The second revolution is *equality* of opportunity. That revolution is underway. The next turn of the wheel must be a revolution in quality' (Keppel, 1966, p. 1).

Now, thirteen years later, it seems safe to say Keppel's quantity, equality, quality hierarchy has been advanced up the ladder a full unit. In countries of the Western world the revolution for the concept of equality of opportunity has successfully neared conclusion. Equality of opportunity comes close to being a universally accepted concept, even though definitions may still vary and problems of implementation persist. But, Keppel's next turn of the wheel is upon us. If equality of opportunity is to serve the purposes identified for it in rural schools, it must be accompanied by the emergence of educational programs of high quality. I contend that this latest revolution can also be won, but only if the means to achieve quality are selected, developed, and deployed from the perspective of the people they are intended to serve. It was not many years ago 'when education was a privilege of the privileged, inequality was expected and accepted . . .' (Wise, 1969, p. 6). That period has come to an end. With concerns, efforts, and abilities such as those exhibited by participants in this conference, I am confident that it is possible to achieve a level of quality necessary to guarantee the realization of the concept of equality.

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PART TWO

The Rural Situation in General

The Survival of the Small School

ROBERT S. JOHNSTON

The Survival of the Small School

In Scotland education is provided by a partnership of national and regional government. The population is 5.2 million. There are twelve regions: nine mainland, three island, each of the latter being an archipelago. In this relatively small country in terms of absolute physical distance, the combination of water, terrain and winter climate creates inaccessibility to the extent that 24 per cent, or about 600, of our 2,500 or so primary schools have fewer than fifty pupils; 12 per cent, or just under 300, have fewer than twenty-five pupils; and 2 per cent, or 57, fewer than ten. Ten per cent of our 450 or so secondary schools have fewer than one hundred pupils.

The treatment of the theme of this paper, the survival of the small school, is under three heads. First, there is a commentary on the notion of 'fight' which, I think you will agree, would be commonly associated with the term 'survival'—in this case the 'fight' for the survival of the small school. Finally, there is a commentary on the conditions for the successful existence of the small school. By making that my final section I mean to suggest that this is the real issue worthy of examination—not only by professional educators but by the public served by education. For the purposes of this talk, a 'school' is assumed to be a building which pupils and teachers actually attend.

The Notion of Fight for Survival

The title 'Survival of the Small School', carries the passion which can surround so much of the discussion of the small rural school. It carries the note of threat to the continued life of small schools in existence; it carries the note of fear that few, if any, new small schools will be brought into existence, even if the circumstances seem propitious; and it carries the note of the determined defence of the small school, a note which has become more internationally clamant in the late 1970s.

Certainly, in the United Kingdom and in other countries, any disposition on the part of administrators to be critical of small schools and to attempt further centralization, rationalization and consolidation has been meeting more articulate, better-planned defence. No doubt there are small schools which will still close. A combination, where it exists, of sharply falling rolls and severe financial constraints will cause closures, particularly in areas (more characteristic of England than the rest of the United Kingdom) which are relatively compact, where distances between settlements are comparatively small, where road systems are relatively good, where the extremes of weather are not too severe, where some settlements are recognisably focal for an area, where the accommodation is little used for community purposes and where there are reasonable affinities in the traditions and aspirations of com-

munities. In circumstances other than these, future policies for the provision of education, particularly primary education, in sparsely populated areas, are likely to be governed by the fact that doubts about the small school are not nearly as clear-cut as they were in the 1960s. It is much less likely for example, that policies will be able to be founded on some generally accepted minimum desirable size of primary school. It is no longer an authoritative and confident assumption that primary schools below three-teacher are educationally size risky.

It is salutary for the public in each country and in each region to be aware of the extent of past policies of closure. For example, in Scotland between 1960 amd 1970, when primary school rolls actually rose by 38,000, the number of primary schools fell by about 350. Indeed, between 1970 and 1978, despite a drop in primary school rolls of 60,000, the number of primary schools has fallen by only five. These figures do not exclusively indicate closures as they are influenced by the trend towards smaller schools in urban areas but they serve as a rough guide to the contrast in rates of closure. The rate of closure of urban schools is now surpassing that of rural schools. Future closures of primary schools will be much more variably argued on individual cases, regard having to be made to the attitude of the local public, the public use of the premises, and the quality of relationship between the school and its public. There is a general distrust of large schools, even in cities; more inclination to question the conventional economic arguments deployed against the small schools; small schools have now to be assessed not as narrowly specific institutions but as community concerns, and communities are learning fast to lay claim to their schools with tenacity and skill; and such evidence as has been produced about the performance of young people who have attended small schools in sparsely populated areas has demonstrated, above all, that there are many variables to be taken into account. The best and most recent evidence of pupil performance in final external examinations shows that girls from sparsely populated areas do considerably better than girls in cities and the boys do slightly better. As almost all pupils from sparsely populated areas in Scotland attend State schools these comparisons are based on data from within the State system.

The public should also be aware of the national context to the particular circumstances of the small rural school. In Scotland the greatest problems about the staffing of schools, and the retention of teachers, have occurred in our biggest urban area. And the greatest problems facing us in reallocations of pupils, and use or disposal of surplus educational plant will occur in the urban areas where rolls are falling fast. There will be more dynamite in programs of rationalization there, I think, than in the Highlands and Islands. The rate of population decrease in some of the rural areas is less than in the cities, and the employment opportunities that used to exist in cities for young people from rural areas are no longer there.

One's regard for the small school in the rural area can depend a great deal on the position from which you view them. If you live in Glasgow, you come to know, for example, how much certain essential human services—the police, the nursing profession, for example—have traditionally depended on the genial, assiduous talent originating in the sparsely populated areas. These are good circumstances for a national feeling of co-existence and interdependence.

The Notion of Mere Survival

So much for the obvious ring in the title; the 'fight' for survival. But our title carries another, maybe less patent, but perhaps more significant, note. It could be described as 'the mere survival' ring.

The first context of 'mere survival of the small school' to which I want to refer is essentially political. In two of the countries I have been privileged to visit during the OECD investigation of education and teacher support in sparsely populated areas, governments were prepared to countenance, in one case to re-countenance, patterns of small schools in rural areas. In one instance, as far as one could judge, central government left the levels of resource, accommodation, and general status of the school to be determined almost exclusively by the will and purse of the localities. These levels appeared to vary a great deal, and were ominously low in certain instances. The small school system was surviving, but hardly dynamically. One had the feeling that national and local government had failed to debate their complementary responsibilities and opportunities. The partnership of central and regional government in the provision of education will always have its tensions but it is essential. In the second country, central government had decided, largely as the result of regional and community pressures, to reverse a policy of substantial centralisation and was allowing small schools to be recreated. But many of the simple, fundamental conditions for the success of the recreated system were not present: teacher supply was uncertain, turnover of teachers substantial, teacher support negligible. These sincere, but perfunctory, attitudes were allowing the small schools to survive but the systems carried no conviction or promise of an assured future. It seemed quite possible to me that in a few years it would be alleged, on a prima facie basis, that the small schools had failed, when, in fact, the conditions had failed them. Alleged failure of this kind in some countries can, most unfortunately, create a wider international suspicion of the small school. The specific circumstances surrounding apparent failure of a policy in one country are so often obliterated by the general headlines.

The danger of the mere survival of small schools may be put in the form of a speculation. Imagine authorities and administrators who are determined to close small schools. Imagine that they are frustrated in their plans because local communities put up sustained resistance, because elected members in their general forum vote for closure but oppose specific proposals when they affect the schools in the communities they serve, because the resistance is clogging up the administrative machine and preventing other responsibilities from being expeditiously discharged. Consider the temptation to suffer a small-school system but to do little to make it work fully and effectively. Reduce the level of property maintenance here, fail to replace a teacher there. Cynically calculate the connection between deteriorating accommodation and the impending retirement of a head teacher. Concentrate the work of advisors and other support staff in the burghs. The general lack of buoyancy in the circumstances I have described amounts to the mere survival of the small school.

I suggest that the survival of the small school may in the last quarter of the twentieth century have at least as much to fear from the prospect of mere survival as

from the visible drama of a fight. And it can be difficult for an individual school to fight off debility. Argue too strongly the plight and one may be accused of showing how complicated the small school system can be. Argue not at all and the willingness to surrender is assumed.

Conditions for the Success of the Small School

The evidence accruing from international studies and the specific focus accruing from a conference such as this gives us the important opportunity to get beyond the generalised passions of support for, or opposition to, small schools; to accept that there will continue to be national and local circumstances which are more or less propitious to small schools; and, above all, to concentrate on a clarification of the conditions necessary, or advisable, for the successful educational performance of small schools. If we do so, we will be addressing ourselves to factors which should be more or less common to all circumstances. We will be clarifying the criteria so that these can then be weighed, not only by those who are responsible for the organisation of education in this or that area, but by the various groups, professional and public, who are seeking particular degrees and forms of education in this or that rural area.

Certain conditions for the successful life of small schools relate to *teacher supply*. It is very important that the rural areas themselves should produce teachers who are then willing to teach in the rural areas. Against the dire circumstances of teacher shortage and teacher turnover some of us have seen in certain countries, any worry of parochialism is beside the point. Scotland has so far been fortunate in this respect. But participation in the OECD project has brought home to us that our luck will only continue if we take certain steps. As rolls fall, as fewer teachers are needed, as fewer students are admitted, then it could happen that, unconsciously, fewer might be admitted who come from, and want to return to, sparsely populated areas. In countries where pupil numbers are falling, and the number of admissions to teacher-training is being reduced, it may be necessary to ensure that students who come from rural areas and/or wish to teach there are not excluded from entry to training. One need only choke for a few years the admission to specialist areas of students from rural areas to emasculate the curriculum for many a day in rural areas. The international evidence suggests that every teacher produced in a rural area is a precious commodity.

Despite many popular reservations there is much to be said for a central or national or state system of pupil-teacher ratios. They represent objectives for national and regional government, they allow accurate calculations of cost. They provide welcome defence on a rainy day. They make politicians pause before interfering recklessly. They also provide a basis for the consideration of exceptional circumstances and priorities. One would expect general systems of pupil-teacher ratios to acknowledge the particular circumstances of small schools in rural areas.

Certain conditions relate to *teacher qualifications and training*. Those who teach in small schools, no matter how remote, have to be, by professional training and qualification, the recognised peers of their colleagues generally. There is much to be

said for national or state-wide systems of training and qualification. Wherever colleges of education are situated, whatever emphasis may or may not be put into the preparation of teachers for the particular circumstances they will find in small schools, the temptation should be resisted to make the context for training so exclusive as to run any risk of a charge of different standards. The temptation to move from a recognition of the difficulty of attracting teachers to remote areas towards the employment of unqualified staff is also to be resisted. If yielded to, it quickly becomes a norm which it is very difficult to re-examine.

There is a case for including, in both the pre-service and in-service training of all teachers, components which deal with the school, the teacher, and their relation to the community. The case is particularly strong in the training of those who are to teach in rural areas. A body of case study material particular to a variety of rural areas should be built up by the colleges. The teacher-employing authorities, if they do not happen to control the colleges, should help the colleges build up these authentic resources, for they have everything to gain. There is a case too, for deploying students in certain rural schools for teaching practice. The early recognition, under the guidance of the most enlightened teachers in our rural schools, of the value and necessity of individual and group methods of teaching and learning in the multi-stage class would be a boon. There is a case for training teachers to be versatile. Those teachers who have been proficient in, and prepared to teach, more than one subject have been the bulwark in many of our smaller secondary schools. Any determination to produce thoroughly qualified teachers should not overlook the circumstances in which the qualifications are used.

Certain conditions for the successful life of small schools relate to *school and teacher support*. It is an advantage to have some bases for teacher support in or near various rural areas, where appropriate expertise and resources for support to small schools can be built up, and a certain quality of relationship and affinity established between the personnel giving support and the teachers getting the support.

It is a tremendous advantage if there is some measure of continuity between the pre-service and in-service training of teachers who work in rural areas. This calls, in most countries, for an effective relationship between the institutions responsible for the initial training of teachers and the authorities who actually employ and deploy the teachers. If I may be allowed one extended reference to a Scottish development. Aberdeen College of Education has for the past two years deployed three of its best and most experienced staff in sustained school-based support. This entails these tutors spending alternate spells of four weeks in the field and in the college. The 'out' periods are spent in school-based support in geographical areas some hundreds of miles from base. The tutors concentrate mainly on helping small schools chosen by the will of the teachers themselves and the teacher-employing authorities. The first spell in the field is spent analysing and verifying teacher needs which have been generally signalled in advance by the teacher. The field tutors thereafter work alongside the teachers. Since the emphasis is on small schools the understanding is that the tutor is ultimately to help the school establish a whole-school policy along the lines which the school has indicated as its wish. We are only now at the stage of serious evaluation but among the points that are already evident are these: the initial nature

of a request for help may or may not be precise for it takes a sustained, working relationship before needs are accurately articulated; it is only through an actual, shared working relationship that possible modifications of teaching method are accurately understood and their effect more than fleeting; with us, at any rate, the fact that some of the support comes from a source other than the employing authority offers the teacher freedom from pressures; the sustained presence of the tutor in the area becomes known to parents, and there are opportunities for them to discuss what is going on; the tutor's approach to pre-service training is affected by the field work; priorities in more conventional in-service training are able to be determined in the light of the field experience. The work is demanding, of course. I doubt whether it would be possible to expect any one tutor to undertake periods of such duty over periods longer than three years at a time. There are other ways of providing this very valuable continuity between pre- and in-service training. Currently, Aberdeen College and the Western Isles region have jointly appointed (half of the salary being paid by each body) a lecturer-field tutor to oversee the whole five-year pre-service and probationary in-service period of those teachers who will enter bilingual (English-Gaelic) schools. These illustrations underline the importance of co-operation between teacher-employing authorities and teacher-training establishments for the sake of teachers in rural areas. There are implications, of course, for staff recruitment policies in teacher-training colleges; participation in extended field work would be a minimal expectation. There are implications, too, for the analysis of staffing requirements in the colleges of education; due allowance for the field work has to be made.

Certain conditions apply to the *organisation of secondary education*. Not all stages and/or components of secondary education can be easily provided within daily travel of all homes. This will become the subject of more precise discussion among communities, and between schools and communities, in the 1980s. There is, in many countries like Scotland, a wide gulf between, on the one hand, the ostensibly simple wish of communities that their children should receive as much as possible of their secondary education as near home as possible and, on the other hand, the elaborate professional discussion of what constitutes the essential curriculum and feasible methodology of teaching in the secondary schools. It is not just a matter of deciding the range of subjects young people should study in secondary schools but also the means of giving young people of the same age the chance to study subjects at varying depths and at varying rates. In smaller secondary schools, a teacher may have to teach more than one subject, and combine different ability groups of students in each class, and assess their performance appropriately. It is going to be difficult, but necessary, to prevent the small secondary school from being overwhelmed by complexities. I have some faith that they will quietly absorb some of the complexities which would be described as unreasonable in larger schools, but they will need some reassurance and support, human and material. The quality of the liaison between the school where a student begins his secondary education and the school where he completes his secondary education will also be important. Will the 'finishing school' be able to offer the opportunity for subjects to be begun at later stages by pupils who were not able to study them earlier?

There is probably nothing that can, or should, be called 'a distinctive rural curriculum'. But there can be particular and vital characteristics of the curricula of rural schools. They should set out to exploit their environment as a physical and cultural resource. This is not to be inward-looking, nor to neglect the broader scenes (who could manage that in the face of the mass media?) but to ennoble origins in a world increasingly prone to anonymity.

Certain conditions apply to the relationship between *schools and the public they serve*. I have touched on school-community aspects more than once. All I want to add here is that, first, we are talking of a dimension of rural education in which the principal or head teacher is a key figure. His personal and professional visibility and accessibility matter a great deal; so does his manner of communication, and I have implied the need for a corps of people in the field whose very practical knowledge of education enables them to explain it in terms which the interested non-professional can understand. There is another point of professional integrity at stake. If active school-community understanding ultimately depends on willingness to participate and the confident use of participating skills then it is essential that the day-by-day tenor and the essential, consistent methodology of the staff should embody the participative style and produce participation-inclined young people. Whatever form of committee structure we establish, these will only operate successfully to the extent that they are underpinned by healthy, informal relationships.

Conclusion

I have suggested that the rural debate about the future of the small school should be about the conditions for its effective life. If we concentrate on these conditions, we shall be usefully clarifying the ring for any fights that may still ensue. More important, we shall reduce the chances of the mere, stagnant, survival which I see as the dangerous prospect. There are still some difficulties ahead for the small secondary school, and there will be a particular need for people who can translate the elaborate educational vision into terms which the public can understand, for they must be understood.

Ultimately the effective survival of small schools depends upon the preparedness of teachers to work in them, and have more than a fleeting affinity with them and their environments; upon the quality of these teachers, which depends, more than in urban areas, on the quality of professional support they secure while they are in post; upon the ability of the small secondary school to find a way through the elaborate strain of curriculum debate; and upon the quality of the partnership established between the public whose children go to these schools and the teachers who serve in them.

PART THREE

The Community Situation

Community participation in schools and in local and regional development was one of the key thoughts pervading many of the discussions during the conference. Education and community development were seen as being more closely interdependent than is generally recognised. For schools to more accurately respond to the needs of local communities there needs to be a thrust towards regional-local organisational structures and increased resource autonomy through provisions that place more responsibility and authority in the hands of local residents. All of the papers in Part Three, in one way or another, speak to the issues of community involvement, local decision-making and provision for local responsibility and authority in co-ordinating community needs with educational provisions.

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PART THREE

The Community Situation

Community Involved Education—A Rural Experiment

DON MCLEAN

Community Involved Education
A Rural Experiment

The fact of educational disadvantage in rural Australia in terms of length of schooling, participation in higher education and below average achievement has been long recognised and was detailed in the Karmel report *Schools in Australia* (May 1973).

This report also listed such possible causes of disadvantage as high teacher turnover, costs of higher education, limited cultural facilities, lack of employment opportunities and so on. However, in addition to this matrix of possible factors which could contribute to rural disadvantage the Karmel report also indicated a more pervasive possible factor:

> Much of the literature suggests that the influence of the school itself is relatively small in relation to that of home factors associated with the occupation of the father which reflects the educational level of parents and governs a whole way of life.[1]

The impact of this factor is usually considered in terms of a social class conflict between the middle class values of the typical school and its staff and the contrary values of socially disadvantaged groups of one kind or another. However, it can also be applied to more general groups such as rural communities which place great importance on practical problem solving skills and manual/motor activities in general, rather than the skills of abstraction and reasoning which, as Karmel says, are central to academic achievement.

There is considerable evidence that where the values of the school are at odds with the values of the school community the resulting conflict will manifest in a significant decrease in pupil achievement. What I am saying is that typically schools in rural Australia are in at least one significant aspect, in a condition of alienation from their communities as a whole.

On the other hand as we all know, rural communities have traditionally had to fight extremely hard to obtain education for their children, particularly at the post primary level and typically have a great respect for both education in general and their local school in particular. No one is more ready to turn up to a school working bee or a parent teacher meeting than the rural parent, and very often the more remote the parent, the more regular their attendance at school activities.

We thus have a paradox where a rural community values education greatly and is very supportive of school as an institution, yet the local school itself tends to be seen as a foreign influence which is more or less alienated. This in turn produces the ambivalent attitude to schools so frequently found in rural communities where the

[1] Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (Chairman: Peter Karmel), *Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, Schools in Australia May 1973*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1973, p. 20. *P.P.*, No. 55, 1973.

school is publicly defended and indeed lauded, but is frequently the private source of much criticism.

Rural people also frequently have a lack of regard for rules and regulations, for government and experts generally, and particularly agricultural experts. On the other hand they feel they are dependent on these experts in many ways and they also have a strong sense of the integrity of the individual and the person's competence in the job. They do not expect teachers to tell them how to run their farms and they extend the same courtesy of not wishing to tell teachers how to teach.

While these attitudes are not confined to rural communities, they have particular significance in rural education, not only because of the effects of the conflict on pupil achievement, but because of the way the school instead of using and reinforcing community strengths, actually tends to downgrade them. The farmer's son may be a competent earner of his livelihood with a range of practical skills from driving a tractor to knowing how to construct a fence which will not easily fall down, or assist in a difficult delivery at lambing time. He can be made to feel incompetent, however, because of his failure to master some abstract skills required in an academic curriculum. A housewife who can run a busy household during harvest time, coping with all sorts of unexpected demands and emergencies can feel helpless to offer advice to her family about schooling and would prefer to leave it to the experts.

The reality is that people who live in rural communities have developed real strengths and skills which have enabled them both to survive and to develop a viable life style in an often difficult environment.

In country Victoria a typical rural town with a population around 1,000 will have a wide range of sporting facilities including an eighteen-hole golf course, an olympic-size swimming pool, tennis courts, basketball and netball courts, football oval, cricket ovals. There will be a list of social and service clubs ranging from the local agricultural society to the hospital committee or the fire brigade, as well as Rotary, Apex and so on. All of these organisations will be run by voluntary workers and the facilities will have been largely provided by voluntary effort sometimes with the assistance of local government or other government grant. In the development of these resources many people will show organising ability, initiative, resourcefulness, a capacity for co-operative self help and all sorts of skills which are just the skills which should produce success in the field of education but which so far have been little employed. Too often indeed they have been discouraged.

It is within this general framework that the Victorian Country Education Project has developed.

The Country Education Process

The Australian Schools Commission in 1977 asked each State to designate disadvantaged rural areas for priority funding. The scheme was to approach the problems of rural education in new ways, looking beyond individual schools to areas or regions, bringing schools together to share resources and educational programs, cutting across the divisions of State versus church and private schools, or of primary versus secondary schools.

Although this paper concerns the Victorian Country Education Project, the general philosophy and methods used are similar in all States and have produced exciting developments in many isolated areas throughout Australia.

At the heart of the Country Education Project process are some fundamental beliefs: We regard learning as synonymous with development, a process of gaining mastery, control over our own environment, a sense of competence that enhances self-esteem and the capacity to act *on* the world rather than merely *in* it. We believe that rural communities have already developed a range of skills and competencies which enable considerable control over a limited environment, but they lack in some cases the skills to gain control over a wider environment. Educational disadvantage thus created arises from community isolation, lack of such resources as access to special services and technical facilities and a lack of congruence between the schools and the community.

To remove that educational disadvantage, we must work on the total community, break down isolation and barriers to communication, identify the resources they *do* have and build on them, create new networks that ensure access and greater local control of essential delivery systems. Local people must be actively involved in decision-making, in selecting their own means to achieve their own ends, in modifying a general curriculum so it is relevant to local community needs. Only in this way can we build on existing community strengths, harmonize the values of school and community, and encourage the development of the real process of education. For it is not mathematics or science or literature or history in themselves that make an educated person; it is knowing how to make decisions and act *in the light of* what such subjects tell us.

In Victoria we embedded this process of people-development through community involvement into every level of planning. We selected five areas of Victoria which met the criteria of isolation, socio-economic disadvantage, inadequate school facilities, the existence of both State and Catholic schools and a sufficient geographic cohesiveness to enable communication and sharing to occur. We then began the process which briefly involved the following steps:

1. Contacting local agencies such as municipal authorities, schools, post offices, service groups like Rotary, Apex, the welfare officer, to enlist their support. Education had to be seen as a community concern, not just school based.
2. Advertising the Country Education Project as a school/community project aimed at meeting locally felt needs.
3. Calling *public meetings* to explain the philosophy, of sharing, building on existing resources, local involvement. These meetings were held in small towns which then sent delegates to a larger central area meeting.
4. Asking them to elect their own *Area Committee* (half teachers, half lay people) to start the work of identifying both needs and resources.
5. Appointing a local person to act as an *Area Co-ordinator*, a network building activist and organiser. It was essential tha a local person, not a professional outsider, be used to tie the area together. We wanted to build on

local knowledge and develop the skills of local people. Those chosen were *not* professionals, and were mostly farmers with no formal qualifications in education.

6. Conducting a *Needs/Resources Survey* of the entire region. We refused to adopt a deficit mentality and insisted on areas identifying resource people whose skills might be used to teach others. Teachers cannot know it all, and we wanted to broaden the definition of educational competence from its usual academic one to one that included local skills and talents. Saw sharpening, gardening, cooking, handicrafts, knowledge of local history, pruning, fishing, boat building, technical know-how, stamp collecting, all have value in educating for local development. In addition, physical resources, halls, sport grounds, equipment projects had to be located. People were asked what they could offer, and how they would be prepared to help. Individual schools often had items of equipment rarely used but which, when pooled with other materials elsewhere in the area, suddenly became useful.
7. Identifying area-wide educational *needs* on the basis of this survey, every community group (in some cases almost every individual in the area) was asked what *they* saw to be the educational disadvantages and hence real needs to be filled. This reversed the all too frequent pattern of planners deciding what is good for people, what they really need and then providing an adequate delivery system because they lack the necessary resources.

Clearly there is a problem in asking people what they need. It assumes people know what they lack and can define the means to fill the gap. It opens up a Pandora's box of demands for costly equipment, 'wants' perhaps, rather than needs. Yet the Country Education Project process worked because local people are more sensible than most planners imagine. People *can* be trusted. It also worked because needs were linked with the *resources* survey. They found their *area* (as opposed to just their local school or town) possessed people resources and physical resources well beyond their expectations. Because we had forced them to think more broadly and include buildings other than schools, educators other than teachers, learning materials other than books and blackboards, a whole range of new possibilities opened up. Their horizons were widened, not by looking to the cities as suppliers of resources, but by looking at *local resources* that could be better developed. They could then list needs in priority order.

Implementation

Do not imagine that the process described above was easy to implement. The Victorian Planning Committee had one full-time executive officer whose task it was to 'open up' the Country Education Project process in the five designated areas. The philosophy was not easy to explain and led to some misunderstanding, resentment, false hopes. The Planning Committee issued guidelines for areas to follow in the preparation of educational programs (which formed stage (vii) of the sequence).

Country folk regard these frequently as 'academic', 'bureaucratic', arbitrary. One of their major complaints was that we insisted on a preference for programs to meet *area-wide* needs, on sharing between systems and across schools. We said we would not fund individual schools or separate community groups. They had to identify *common* needs across their area, and devise shared co-operative ways of meeting them.

Parochial jealousies sometimes got in the way. Country people said the areas were artificially created (they were), that they cut across 'natural' patterns of interaction, that the sharing idea was impossible, that all they needed was equipment and transport, that we were not genuinely concerned about community participation. When the Planning Committee rejected program proposals that ran counter to guidelines, distrust arose because here, yet again, was a central committee saying what could and could not be done.

However, the process of interaction that developed from these conflicts, the sharing of victories achieved, the growing realisation that the local communities did have the capacity to develop and implement really worthwhile programs—all these things developed trust and bound the communities together.

They had found the meaning of community. Despite parochial barriers, and lack of shared values, 'community' arises from conflict. They joined to find common problems and difficulties and in the process learned and grew as competent people. The Planning Committee had felt that committees would develop more competent, efficacious, self-confident people through sharing and group action than through individualized efforts. We felt that such co-operative efforts would develop a political know-how and an ability to understand and hence work through the education and political systems. The essence of powerlessness is isolation and separation from the means of control. As Weber suggested conflict brings people together and real community arises from joint action to achieve group interests.

That we were on the right lines is clear from what has developed. People in the designated areas are more aware of the benefits of sharing. They talk of themselves as areas and parochial barriers are breaking down. They have a better understanding of how 'the system' works and how to use it to achieve their goals. They have developed their own programs to meet community needs. They handle the spending of funds locally and responsibly. Priorities are set carefully and waste is avoided. This is real accountability for public funds with local committees being directly responsible to the communities they serve. Areas have seen that curriculum is a total community process, of building a symbiotic relationship between the school and 'outsiders', of tackling the educational needs of parents, old people, the whole community because all of these affect the educational development of children in schools.

Illustrative Programs

Let me give a few examples of the sort of community involved education programs that these isolated country areas developed. *They* did it, not the Planning Committee, and in so doing they have learned to think in new ways about education, local development and community.

In the Western Wimmera Area (a sheep farming region on the far border of the State) the survey indicated a crying need for technical life skills. No technical schools or practical skills curriculum were available. They located ordinary people with skills they could team to others. They talked an agricultural college and a technical school outside the area into offering expert help. They found equipment that could be used in classes. Now, they run technical life skills classes for over 700 people, covering everything from welding, motor engine maintenance and woodwork, to sheep diseases, native plant cultivation and craftwork. The locals run classes where they want them. They found empty garages, farm sheds, halls that could be used so that schools no longer represent the only site of learning. The schools are used at night for community classes geared to needs that arise from the local environment. Schools are thereby demystified and made more viable as genuine community development resources. Local skills are extended and shared, talents used to develop farm capacity, children shown that others in their community apart from teachers are competent resource people. Change thus arises not only from within the schools; it comes from the new process of community-wide self-help.

Several areas have used the local environment to develop new skills. In the King-Ovens Valley Area, a tobacco-growing, mountainous region, criss-crossed by rivers, swimming lessons were essential but not available. Cheap pools were built and classes brought to them. Not only did this develop physical skills, it also broke down the isolation of tiny schools and helped develop social skills. They also built up a skiing program, since local children could not afford expensive ski equipment and were unable to take advantage of the natural environment. In the northern wheat-growing region, the Mallee Track Area Committee developed a desert wilderness survival camping program. Children are now taught to understand their local environment, and to master it. In the process, of course, they learn a great deal of biology, meteorology, zoology and botany. But the formal academic curriculum is made locally relevant in a way that develops community capacity to improve their own environment. Another area on the coast has developed a program on ocean life, skuba-diving, water-skiing, marine biology. Again, the 'curriculum' does not reside in the school in remote, academic terms. An additional spin-off that was not anticipated is that these three areas now exchange children, so the programs relevant to deserts, mountains and coastal areas extend the horizons of children and parents previously locked into a narrow existence.

Several areas identified a need for personal development and cultural enrichment. Drama presented an obvious medium, but good theatres were too far away, the areas rarely visited by travelling companies. The Resources Survey however, revealed new possibilities. In the King-Ovens Valley Area, local talents existed not just in a few lay actors. Their committee found many people who could remember historical events, folklore, songs of the old times. Like the Foxfire Project in the U.S.A. they decided to build on these resource people. Children and parents went out and collected songs and stories, wrote plays and comedy sketches about local events, learnt the history of their *own* area. Their drama program results in a yearly 'O.K. Show' which enjoys massive support. The children have been given a past, not through textbooks but through their own investigations. Isolated people are no

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longer lonely but drawn together in a communal enterprise. Writing, listening, recording, acting skills are developed in a locally relevant way.

In the West Wimmera area drama resources were better, with many local drama groups. But most halls had poor lighting and shows never raised much money because they were put on once only in the local towns. Our area-wide sharing concept brought these people together, and funds for portable stage-lighting equipment generated a new network of drama activity. Schools and communities now share an enriched cultural program and local halls have a new lease of life.

The Mallee Tracks drama program focuses less on performances than on personal development. A highly skilled local woman now travels the area, teaching teachers, parents and children skills of communication, role-playing, and self-presentation that have transformed people by improving interactional skills. Adults learn to carry on this work when she is no longer there, and the program already has affected classroom behaviour and expression skills.

No one from outside could have suggested such programs would work. Yet the locals said they wanted them. They found people in their area who could run them and they are amazed at the benefits reaped.

The other aspect of cultural enrichment missing from rural schools was music. Few teachers had music skills and professional instrumental classes were located in distant larger towns.

In one remote area (the Mallee Track) where no music had been taught for lack of specialist teachers and equipment, locals found nearly a thousand musical instruments in people's homes, in town halls, local band groups, locked in school cupboards. With Country Education Project money for a travelling music teacher (a local discovered by the survey, and not a professional) and the purchase of a few new instruments to fill the gaps, that area now provides group instruction for individual instrumental work in every school in the area. At night, similar classes are offered to the adult community. The message is that small additional funds can go a long way if they build on and develop local resources in a flexible, imaginative way. In the King-Ovens Valley Area, a similar music program is providing classes to every child at an estimated cost (to our Country Education Project) of twenty four dollars per pupil per year. In the West Wimmera Area three local women travel to bring musical experience to every school. They leave behind instruments to practise on but they also leave behind them teachers whose morale has been boosted and whose talents have been extended.

Art-craft presents the same picture. Specialist teachers could not be provided for every school. In some of our areas no specialist art-craft was available at all. Now they are using local artists and craftsmen to visit schools, and a mobile van is used by schools during the day, by community groups at night.

Country students are seriously disadvantaged in finding employment. Job opportunities are limited. The academic curriculum taught by urban-trained teachers directs attention to the cities. Work experience possibilities are restricted because travel costs are high. Yet again, the Needs/Resources Survey altered the picture. Because local employers were *asked* about deficiencies in education, they began to offer help. In the fruit-growing, dairy-farming North Central Area, a big milk

factory now provides work-experience chances for hundreds of secondary students. Machinery maintenance, laboratory work, office skills, delivery and assembly-line work can be experienced at first hand.

Rotary Clubs in country towns have now established links with city clubs to provide a country-city work exchange program. Visits include home-stays in a more personal, protected environment so country students are inducted into the 'city-culture' more broadly than any one-day excursion can provide. Our funds helped provide a full-time person to co-ordinate this city experience program for all country areas.

In the Far East Gippsland Area, they have established an information exchange in an empty shop so students and parents can enquire about work opportunities throughout the area.

A superb example of education and local development at work exists in a town not funded by us. At Maryborough, youth unemployment is very high. Local teachers, bankers, businessmen have formed a new industry in the town fashioning chamois-leather shirts. Students work on design, processing and manufacture, assisted by adult groups. Jobs are being created and a new local industry developed, but the best aspect of the scheme is its linking of education with later life. The country cities of Bendigo and Shepparton are now exploring the possibilities for similar development plans.

Minority ethnic groups exist in Australian rural areas as well as the cities. Yet migrant services, bilingual teachers and so on do not exist in remote schools. In the King-Ovens Valley Italian tobacco-growers live side by side with Australians, yet they interact little. Following a special survey of their needs, using local interpreters to reach women isolated by language and culture, the Area Committee is now developing specific services for ethnic groups. Community centres for child-care advice, parent counselling and homework help will bring Australians and Italians together. They are already exerting pressure to have the Agricultural Bulletins printed in Italian; special agricultural extension courses in Italian will lead to better economic development of the area; and school classes will teach the Italian culture and language to all instead of ignoring it in favour of the Australian. The point is that these Italian families have lived in the valleys for up to thirty-five years, yet until the Country Education Project process began, no one had asked *them* what they needed, or how education could help them develop. Turks in the North Central Area are now beginning a similar process and we hope, will enter a new community relationship.

I could multiply examples—of farm women teaching children to read in holiday groups where the schools have failed; of school group days which bring together tiny schools and use the children's experiences to develop writing and discussion skills; of a P. 12 scheme at Lorne which breaks the artificial barriers so that primary and secondary teachers *share* their tasks and develop a *total curriculum* for the school and its special needs—but I think the essential points have been made.

Conclusion

Community education must be a total process involving schools within the whole community. They must define their *own* needs, their own strengths, resources,

goals. They should be able to design educational experiences which bring children and local adults together in a way that builds competence in a co-operative way. Non-professionals and non-school based resources must be recognised as vital assets in the development process and they must be used in new ways. There must be learning and growth by the whole community, not confined within the walls of schools to dependent children. Education must help to bind communities together, not divide them.

Decentralisation is not simply a matter of devolving responsibility to regional administration or to schools although both of these processes are necessary and desirable. Decentralisation must involve the local community on an area-wide basis so that a regional office or a local school becomes one of many resource centres in a process that pools area-wide resources (both people and physical facilities). Small schools must be kept open and alive or the local community will die, but they are only viable if tied into a working network that goes beyond them.

Control must include local control of money for educational purposes. This involves the abolition of the false economy of a system which permits bulk purchase and supply from a central metropolitan agency which may produce slightly cheaper individual items but which destroys local growth and enterprise. The ultimate cost to the community is far greater than the initial small savings. On the other hand local financial control also builds responsibility, initiative, know-how, accountability and efficiency and cost effectiveness. It develops local competence, and in the end it is much cheaper as has been demonstrated by the Victorian Country Education Project.

The solution to the problems of education must be cost effective and will have to rely largely on redistribution of funds rather than increased funding. Cost cutting can be destructive if carried out arbitrarily, but the Country Education Project process has assisted in the building of communities by allowing them to spend money in ways they feel will be most effective. In doing so, it has also provided cost effective solutions to education problems.

Some areas are already talking about forming a co-operative to attract funds from other sources. An area-wide joint schools council may be formed so that the area's educational needs are met rather than inefficiently failing to cater for each school's separate needs. Petrol shortages are already beginning to influence locals from shopping away in larger towns and local shops are regenerating. Technology does not have to mean greater centralisation and the destruction of small rural communities.

In a process of trust, we can give real responsibility to local communities. They build confidence, acquire new competences, demythologize the education system, create new and imaginative methods of people-development. Quality in education does not lie in content, it lies in process. It is not merely looking at the 'highest achievements of mankind'; it is striving to achieve excellence for oneself. A community involved education is one that means involvement, through active negotiation in the process of learning, through sharing the teacher's power to define what shall be taught, participating in deciding the strategies to be used and having confidence to challenge a system that fails to allow that sort of 'engagement'. Any national system that refuses to permit education and local development to go hand in hand does not have true nationwide interests at heart.

PART THREE

The Community Situation

Education Service Centers: Cop, Deliveryman or Savior?

RALPH G. BOHRSON

Education Service Centers: Cop, Deliveryman, or Savior?

Following poets, editorial writers are probably best at fitting big things into small spaces. Not long ago a writer for the *New York Times*, compared the traditions of the pastoral society with the gleam of the Big Apple. Back from a country summer, the writer found people in New York:

> Like pebbles in a river; [they] come in more colors, shapes and sizes than people who live elsewhere. And yet for all the talk of abrasive eccentricity rife in New York we find people here, taken as a whole, more rounded—probably from rubbing against each other—than people in the country . . . . We wouldn't for a moment deny the stamina and good humor of country folk, who are the glue of the ages. But our heart leaped up when we set foot on pavement again, just as it did when we first plunged into the woods. The steeldrum combis, the walking stereo, . . . the nut wearing gloves but no shoes—we liked it. City people think life is short and what you make of it. They believe you can alter life. Even more than stamina, they believe in drama.

I don't think that the writer would deny the true drama of survival against the bitter odds of the frontier, nor would he deny that in the mine, on the fishing boat, or the sheepstation, life is very much what you make it. Yet, it seems to me at least that in that brilliant burst of fall word color, even in underplaying the toughness and resilience of pastoral people, the writer spots the essential difference and the basic appeal of city people and country folk.

Indeed they're different. Yet they find each other's turf inviting (to visit at least, if not to live on), and they share with each other the hope for the good future of their children. The hopes and dreams of rural, urban and suburban peoples are often the same albeit sometimes differently expressed, but the means of gaining their ends—survival, independence, comfort, power over their lives, happiness, wealth, property—will vary according to opportunities and limits imposed by experience, environment, starting point at birth, luck and more often than not by culture, skin color, and religion. However, irrespective of prejudice or bias—conditions which are not unique to rural or urban settings—the problems of educating children of the countryside have, throughout the world, troubled educationists, politicians, and parents equally. Their concern was that the essential services of education—the constant arm-wrestling with ignorance and superstition—would be poor or missing, or worse yet there was the fear among country parents that they would be forced to rely on city people for their children's education.

In short, rural education has always been a battle against the odds—too much to do, too few people and dollars, too little help and too much ridicule from the outside. As a consequence, parents, teachers and administrators on the frontiers soon

develop the characteristic independence derived from the borderland traditions which have shaped the beliefs of their forebears, their wards and their employers.

Rural education is a vital, some would say fundamental, service which is expected to make the children on the frontier the equals of their urban cousins. Professionals—teachers, principals, counselors—provide educational services for pay. One standard by which rural people gauge their own worth and that of their neighbors is the extent and quality of services available to them. This is true whether the rural people be farmers, farmworkers, miners, fishers, constructors, wanderers, or teachers. Despite much discussion about rural values, rural people want and deserve society's refinements and rewards.

Education in rural areas is usually education in small units, which are not economically efficient by current standards, but which are nevertheless educationally advantageous in a traditionally 'labor intensive' field.

Professional services—teaching, guidance, testing, curriculum, administration, and teacher training—are generally provided directly in the city and suburbs and in the country remotely as distance and terrain come between people and their traditional institutions. That separation, or even the differences in values which the rural traditions uphold do not however make the purposes of education different, only the means. Schools may be small but not rural, or rural but not small, and goals may differ from town to country but Lord Snow's 'gulf of mutual incomprehension' exists between literary and scientific thought as much for the rural student as for the city kid and the unknown future holds as much potential challenge to survival and shock to the system of one as of the other.

The well-prepared mind is no less a national resource in the rural than in the urban neighborhood. Survival either in harmony with or dominance over the environment is and will be essential for all, and educational services—teaching and all related activities—rank no lower in the country than in the city. But if a school is too isolated, too small, too poor, maybe even backward in its view of what is needed to provide the breadth of curriculum, testing and counselling, the service should be available by some means, so goes the philosophy in the United States.

Educational service delivery systems come in all shapes and sizes but are packaged usually from two sources: the college or university, either by direct contact from individual professors or via the special project or extension division; and the State education agency, either from the capital city or from remote outposts. The principal scheme for university-based service systems for teacher rejuvenation, administrative and organizational advice, curricular updating and some diagnostic testing has been developed usually within the division or college of education. Such projects rarely work directly with students or with their parents, and despite the tightly coupled nature of country institutions, little has been done to help link school with community and its priorities. Yet if there is a distinguishing characteristic of rural schools—as opposed to merely small schools in any setting—it is in the congruence of school and area as described in *Education Provision in Sparsely Populated Areas of Western Australia*. 'Schools in isolated areas are frequently characterized by practices which in urban settings are considered to be innovative and highly desirable. For example, the smaller classes of many rural schools encourage a climate of

school community and the development of deeper relationships between teacher and pupils. Teachers in smaller schools routinely utilize procedures such as crossage and cross ability groupings. Opportunities often arise for older pupils to help younger ones. The local environment is rich with opportunities for environmental service and social studies . . . . Schools in sparsely populated areas are more closely allied to the community than is usual in urban areas.'[1]

How, then, do merely small schools and truly rural schools differ in nature and essence? I am afraid that I will do little in this space to clarify what, if any, significant differences exist except to note that in American studies it has been shown that traditional rural communities tend more readily to recognize and to foster traditional values including school/community congruence by an easy interweaving of institutional goals and procedures. Teachers emerge from and stay in the community; a strong sense of community ownership prevails.

Communities in transition, where outside forces are at work or where long dormant minorities become outspoken, may find their school's tradition upset or at least under question and what formerly was a small, rural school remains now a school in isolation. Both kinds seek change from time to time and I now describe four projects which sought from four different perspectives to assist small or small rural schools to change for the better. Three of the projects bore similarities in objective (if not in operational styles) in their efforts to take the newest of educational trends either in teaching or content or both to poverty-ridden coal and mill towns in Pennsylvania, or rich farming communities in North Dakota and Minesota. For Pennsylvania the help of professors and consultants was organized by the privately funded, non-denominational Bucknell University, whose chairman of the Education Department, a dynamic, committed native of the coal region, gained funding through a private foundation. The Upper Susquahanna Valley Project brought teachers together on very specific teaching and curriculum projects. Teachers became researchers and wrote new curriculum material. Two projects for the upper midwestern United States grew out of the University of North Dakota; one, a self-help organization—an assemblage of rural school districts, whose superintendents and principals went through some summer campus workshops with follow-up activities, also by professional help during school months. The project director, a transplanted Canadian educator, son of an itinerant evangelist, also knew rural people, their schools, their fears, and their convictions. Another project involved a legislatively funded 'New School of Education' also at the University of North Dakota and provided opportunities for some 1800 teachers who did not have four-year college degrees. They returned to campus study for completion of degree requirements while usually young master's degree candidates served as teaching interns in the classrooms vacated by the degree seeking professionals. The purposes were twofold: help rural schools meet statewide standards for teacher qualification, and introduce and develop the concepts and practices of the 'open classroom' philosophy, pioneered in Britain as informal schooling and described in the well known 'Plowden Report'. It was an ambitious endeavour to transfer, over an eight-year

[1] Education Department of Western Australia, Studies in Rural Education No. 1, March 1979.

period, a mass of non-degree teachers to standards of certification and at the same time introduce what can only be termed a revolution of teaching style and classroom organization into tradition-laden farm country of a highly conservative State. It too was headed by an energetic professor who came to the job from the neighboring State of Michigan's remote iron ore mining Upper Peninsula.

A follow-up case study written eleven years after the program opened says much not only about that teacher retraining service system, but about requisites for all such rural training systems in the United States:

> The program, (while flawed), tried to solve a problem which rural teachers and communities perceived as important, using a process which kept a considerable amount of power in the hands of the teacher and the local area. The program did not push teachers out of rural education, nor did it send in teams of university experts to tell rural people how backward they were. And ultimately, it was a program which became part of the structure of education in the State.[2]

All three efforts were worked out with and made acceptable to the local school people; all three had the knowledge of, if not the endorsement of State officials; all carried services to the schools as well as expecting teachers to take campus-based study; all were funded from at least two sources, all stressed the importance of the teacher and teaching, and all were operated by committed young lions in their fields, who also knew the thinking and feelings of rural people.

The fourth program launching services from the university, in this case the Alaska Rural Schools Project, had characteristics strongly similar to those cited above. It differed in three ways: a more clearly defined target population—teachers in Alaska's 'bush' schools which had a predominant Alaskan native student population; teachers were generally recruited for and given pre-employment orientation including early travel to villages where they would work—in effect bringing them to a stage of teaching readiness; and, most of the schools were not accessible by highway, making school year follow-up and consultation necessary, by radio, radio phone or by air flight to or from the school site.

None of the above mentioned efforts was made without State involvement but each was significant in bringing new teacher development thinking to remotely based schools and each stressed the quality of teaching and leadership of the school as the most important educational ingredients.

Legally established service agencies at the State government level, the second mechanism employed in the United States, are a sometime thing. State government has often practised a certain creativity in masking its efforts to impose city schooling standards on rural villages and school districts. While its out front motto may be leadership and service, its real objectives are supervision and enforcement. More subtly, the State funds its own service agencies as distributing a form of State aid through intermediate governmental units; boards of cooperative services; or regional service authorities. All in their form provide educational services, often at the request of the local administration to the remote schools. None that I know of face the challenges of rural Australia.

[2] Faith Dunne, unpublished.

Yet, especially because of the interest shown in Australia in decentralization and local involvement, there is something to be learned from a closer look at remotely based professional service cooperatives whether they be mechanisms to enforce State standards, help keep backwater schools abreast of the times, preserve the essence of plurality by helping ethnic communities teach the rudiments of two cultures, or by delivering life preserving aid to schools which otherwise would wither for lack of external support. With certain differences, their structure is similar to your regional offices here.

Texas enacted Regional Educational Service Center law in 1967 and is therefore an old enough structure to have taken on observable form possibly useful to Australians. The Texas plan blankets the State's 4,000,000 square kilometers with twenty centers and includes the cities. In creating and helping fund the RESCs, the Texas reform measure was great indeed, it reduced the number of intermediate units or shire administrations from the 254 county superintendent offices to the prevailing twenty.

Typical of the RESCs is Region XV with its huge ranching spreads capable of boggling the minds of everyone save Australians; it covers a domain not dissimilar from the world which I viewed on my visit in the Yilgarn region and its people express some of the same concerns for their children as I heard in Merredin. They want their children to be well educated and their teachers to stay spiritually and physically in the area. 'Services Available Anywhere Should be Available Everywhere', the center's marching slogan, loosely translated means that if a school system in one part of the State—even the biggest city—offers special programs for the handicapped, similar programs should be offered to Eden (population 525). At the same time, if neighboring Menard (population 600) doesn't want to pay for its share of such programs, both school districts get their way: Eden has the service, Menard does not.

The challenge in decentralizing services, as for other programmatic efforts coming instead from centrally administered systems, is to improve quality and maintain system-wide equality of program offering within allowable funding limits. Money alone is not the determinant, although as one of my former colleagues at the Ford Foundation used to quip 'money is never the question; it is the answer.' I note that here only to emphasize that decentralization of services, particularly by the State, carries with it the assumption that added costs—above the central system—mean either added quality of service, more control of local systems, or both.

Recent observations have reminded me that the search for equity in education should not ignore or downplay the importance of curricular/instructional excellence.

The complexities of the concept have been drawn for us by a discussion of eight forms of equalization.[1] However, I think I do the scheme no serious injustice by grouping all into three forms of equality—adequate resources for the task, appropriate treatment of individuals, and equal outcomes of education. That the search for educational opportunity may be at two levels—equal treatment of equals and

[1] See Frank Darnell, supra. p. 31.

unequal treatment of unequals—is not surprising. On the other hand, for those who need more of something—special classes, bicultural education, enriched environments for certain problems or certain forms of giftedness—more resources are needed to reach the quality that equality connotes. Unequal treatment for unequals can be as significant as any reform project, provided we can find the administrative means to make policy practicable.

During our visit we have experienced the warmth of Australian hospitality and amidst the starkness of terrain and distance, we have seen the richness of resources for the primary schools and the district high schools. Equal treatment of equals seems a mission accomplished if the goal is measured by charts, books, models, projectors, and altogether the things of education. In its distributive role the Department of Education has served these schools well and apparently equally. In providing more than equal services for the less than equal children—unequal treatment for unequals—the central or decentralized service delivery system is confronted with the frustrations of time and distance and the harshness of life on the run.

In-service education, special advice on special problems, intellectual growth for adult development, careful recruitment and selection of teachers equal to the challenges of the country, help to the teacher and community in making common cause, usually deliverable from special outposts, are not easily or cheaply made available.

A decentralized or a regional service unit can be thought of as a means to give a particular flavour to small/rural schools if it meets the four-star test; while it helps compensate for deficiencies and addresses opportunities deriving from rural environment and smallness.

Hence, a decentralized service center to be worth the money must:

1. be a form of equalization for students, giving them access to the special educational privileges enjoyed by students anywhere;
2. create a climate of professionalism within a context of local standards, community values and regional customs, enabling teachers and other professionals to adapt teaching styles and content to region and locality;
3. foster or at least enable innovation and change to come into the bush and bayou by opening windows onto professional and societal changes, making the village aware of schooling and standards outside; and
4. help local professionals and the policymakers to view the schools as systems designed to respond to the rights of the minority as well as to the interests of the dominant class and to create opportunities for the poor and helpless to receive equal treatment by and with the majority.

In Texas, the Region XV office with twenty-two professional staff, provides an impressive array of administrative, instructional, and some direct student services as well and the whole process is overseen by a series of locally elected policy and advisory boards concerned with:

1. ADMINISTRATION

Data processing through a neighboring computer 300 miles away with ter-

minal and dial-up access to the Region's headquarters. Includes marking and reporting, class scheduling, payroll accounting.

Fiscal management and budgeting including recording and reporting of revenue and expenditure information for member schools and districts.

Public information through newsletters reporting available and anticipated services. Press releases, explanatory brochures.

Special projects and technical advisory services to help districts stay current with contemporary educational trends and with rules, regulations, laws and guidelines as they come from the State capital in Austin.

2. INSTRUCTION

Includes in-service sessions and workshops on expanding library services, new curricula materials and teaching devices, and assistance with guidance and counselling programs including direct assistance to the fifty per cent of the Region's schools without guidance personnel.

Special training assistance to schools under State mandate to develop 'Desirable Teacher Competencies' in a Crime Prevention and Drug Education program for all schools. Direct delivery of materials and equipment through a film, slide, cassette distribution program. Transporting of three air-conditioned driver education trailers with simulated driving stations.

Resources teachers and aides to work directly with children of migrant farm workers. Records for migrant workers' children are maintained for the nation in a central computer bank in Little Rock, Arkansas, 800 miles away and are available through a dial-up terminal at the Regional Center.

3. STUDENTS

Consultants in special education for testing, evaluation, and for special materials distribution from the Regional Library. Coordination of programs and distribution of special funds for hearing and visually impaired children.

Workshops and technical assistance to help local schools reach 'state criteria of excellence for reading programs', Texas version of the national 'right to read' drive.

As always, it is difficult to pick the principal beneficiary of services. Whether in-service workshops make a teacher's professional life easier, improve the learning and classroom life of the student, or add primarily to the contracting professor's off-campus income, is a matter of some debate especially by the critics of State mandated service centers some of which seem to combine local service with communication of the State agency's pet projects. The enforcer never sleeps and the delivery man always has a special of the week or month.

The ESC may be seen as the outpost of educational creativity and selfless service to the children of the hinterland or it may be seen as the long steel arm of enforce-

ment sheathed in velvet. It depends on who you ask. Much depends it seems as always on the finely tuned interaction between staff and administration of local school and staff and administration of the service center.

Professional and utilitarian services whether transmitted by telephone, computer terminal, live lecture or transported by car, truck, train or plane do little to compensate for high teacher turnover, second rate professional preparation or uninspired leadership. However, while not a cure, the service center seems an important treatment where too little money, too much distance, and too few people make the job at least the size of the land its on.

I have offered examples of service delivery systems which support or are otherwise illustrative of the dominant conference themes: that is, teaching quality and stability, school/community unity, equality of opportunity, and state control of standards using the principles of administrative/organizational decentralization. My purpose is, of course, to suggest that private and public institutions, however defined here, may have a role in rural development and that government must be involved not just as enforcer, not simply to deliver things and people, but also to help those who lack hope as well as those who have dreams.

The five examples were selected also because they all offer what I consider the most vital of services—that is, assistance in making teachers equal to the incredibly complex and important jobs they face. Teachers in tandem with parents can fashion the structure of a local society. If I have anything specific to offer this conference, it is that you follow the International Year of the Child with a Decade for the Teacher and that you address special attention to finding, preparing, and holding a special corp of teachers for rural education in Australia, reduce the turnover, and demonstrate by every means possible that teachers are as important to the future of the society as the people they teach.

I close with a quotation from the late Elbie Gann, the unheralded father of the modern rural education movement twenty-five years ago in the United States. Elbie was the first to call attention to the 'strengths of smallness' and after a successful career as leader in small rural schools, State official, writer and humanitarian, he left his post as college president in Colorado to work in an Alaskan village. Elbie and his wife Wilma were killed in that service almost a year ago to the day. In his early career he said 'Children like gold are where you find them, and like gold they are precious, malleable, and must be refined by experts.' I would add only that in the quality of that refinement lies the future quality of the society.

PART THREE

The Community Situation

The Responsibilities of Schools in Local Development

SHIRLEY RANDELL

The Responsibilities of Schools in Local Development

The Schools' Responsibility for Students

Under present social arrangements schools are the only places where children can gain a range of specific skills and knowledge which they need to live confidently in society. Schools have responsibilities towards the development of individual students by:

1. developing competence in reading, writing, speaking, listening and calculating skills as tools for extending understanding;
2. giving access to a range of experience and activities through greater emphasis on practical reasoning, confident self-initiation of activity and social competence in working with others;
3. developing a sense of competence, enhanced self esteem, and control over environment.

The Schools' Responsibility for Local Development

Education is, however, much more than what happens in schools. Schools alone cannot be held responsible for educative experiences and formal outcomes. The development of individual students is affected by both their home background and the quality of community life.

Research studies have shown that country parents' aspirations for their children are considerably lower than those in urban areas.[1] If parents' ambitions for their children are to be increased, schools need to develop programs which will involve the parents and provide them with knowledge about the choices which will affect their children's futures. The involvement of parents in educational programs has been shown to have a positive effect on the learning outcomes of their children.

The quality of life is also a powerful influence in education. In rural areas not only do schools need the community to supplement and extend their efforts, but also the community needs the school as a source of community identity, social cohesion and, often, economic development. A high community morale affects children's attitudes to learning.

It can be argued, therefore, that schools have responsibilities for local develop-

[1] See, for example, Neville Behrens 'Schooling and Work' in Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (Chairman: Ronald Fitzgerald), *School, Community and Work: Urban and Rural Aspects*, Poverty and Education Series. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978, pp. 64-65.

ment, particularly in those areas where learning outcomes are depressed, such as inner-city and remote country areas.

The Disadvantaged Country Areas Program

Although the Schools Commission's Disadvantaged Country Areas Program has been operating only for three years, several lessons can be learned from the experiences of all States in investigating new ways of delivering educational services to country students. These are:

STRUCTURES

The structures for decision-making in the program have fostered a high degree of community involvement. Committees at State, area and local levels are representative of both government and non-government system administrators, teachers, parents and community members. In most States local action groups and working parties have a mandatory 50 per cent membership of people from the community.

PROCESSES

In all States there have been attempts to build projects on the identification of positive resources in the community. Parents and community members have shared with educators in identifying needs and developing proposals for educational programs to meet those needs. Area committees as well as State committees have had decision-making powers over the actual expenditure of funds. The concept of sharing among schools has built co-operative networks of people and organisations in country areas. The development of people through the co-operative processes of the program has built confidence and competence in rural communities.

PROGRAMS

Throughout Australia programs designed specifically to improve educational opportunities for students have been capitalised on for adult programs within and out of school hours. Instructors engaged in schools during the day replicate classes for adults at night and weekends. In many programs students and adults learn together in the same settings. The dissemination of productive experiences across areas has multiplied ideas which have been effective. The following examples catch the flavour of various activities which are generating local development.

In the Western Wimmera Area in Victoria up to a thousand people, including seven hundred school leavers and adults participate in a technical life skills program. Subjects ranging from welding, car maintenance, woodwork and crafts are taught in schools, garages, farm sheds and community halls. Both professional and non-professional instructors are involved.

In South Australia an itinerant teacher 'rides the rails' at the Australian National Railway's expense to deliver an expressive arts program to children in three isolated schools. During the day children participate in crafts, drama, art and music activi-

ties and at night adults share in the programs. Photography and jazz ballet are two of the skills brought to these communities for the first time.

A pilot musician in Queensland co-operates with local instructors in providing music education for over 400 students in six centres. Town and regional bands have been formed to enliven the cultural experiences in these country communities.

In Tasmania a resource team of specialists is working with teachers to involve parents as teachers of their own children. Parents contract to hear their children read each evening and attend classes on child development and teaching techniques which increase their awareness of their role as parents in the education of their children.

In both New South Wales and Western Australia, community youth centres and education resource centres, have been established which have had far reaching effects beyond the school in providing services to community groups and individuals. The centres have contributed to social development, cultural enrichment and recreational opportunities for all members of the community.

Indicators for Future Directions

The experiences gained through the structure, processes and programs implemented under the Disadvantaged Country Areas Program have implications for future directions in education for local development. The experience of community participation and local control of educational programs has increased the power of rural communities and contributed an understanding of the processes involved in change. Many of the activities commenced in the schools have now been taken over by the communities, which have tapped into governmental agencies other than education for additional financial, material and personnel support to improve the quality of community life. The sharing principle has encouraged local networks of support both within communities and beyond them, and reduced the divisions between systems and levels of schooling. Communities have identified local physical resources and personnel expertise beyond all expectations as they have focused on the advantages of country life. Attempts are being made to co-ordinate the planning of government and private agencies engaged in delivering services to rural communities.

As educators we must be concerned primarily with improving the day-to-day experiences of schooling for children. Turning towards the community must be evaluated largely in terms of what it does for school change and student development. Parent engagement in the educational programs provided for their children, and the enrichment of community life and environment, both have positive spin-offs in attitudes to learning. A balance is needed between the school's responsibility for and contribution to the individual fulfilment of students, community needs and development, and the needs of society as a whole.

PART THREE

The Community Situation

The Aston Project on Rural Primary School Reorganisation in England

RICHARD WHITFIELD

The Aston Project on Rural Primary School Reorganisation in England*

Origins of the Project

The educational and economic viability of the small school is particularly sensitive to changes in the birth-rate and the availability of local employment for parents within the child rearing age range. During the 1970s in Britain the birth-rate has fallen by about one quarter, and the first sector of the formal educational system to be affected by this is the primary school. Whilst almost all primary schools seem likely to be affected into the 1980s by declining rolls, whether they are located in urban, suburban or rural areas, the impact seems likely to be most marked for schools in rural regions and the communities which they serve. The rural or village school often acts as a focal point for a wide range of social and community activities in addition to its traditional tasks of instructing the young, and these, as well as aspects of the rural economy, could be at risk through administrative changes in the provision of children's education.

After lengthy negotiations, two Aston University departments jointly obtained a modest grant in 1978 from two central government ministries (the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Environment) to investigate over a period of two years the social effects of rural primary school reorganisation in England. At around the same time a somewhat parallel project was funded for Scotland, through related Scottish agencies, and based at the University of Aberdeen. Whilst the Scottish context is different in several important respects, as might be found between States in Australia, the two projects keep in close contact through staff exchanges on our advisory committees. Central to the work of both projects is a view of educational facilities as one element within a range of services which are essential to the satisfactory social and economic as well as educational functioning of rural communities.

The National Context

School administration and the curriculum in England is decentralised and is executed by Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Of these some thirty-nine cater for areas having rural characteristics, though the degree of ruralness varies significantly between these Authorities. Each LEA is autonomous regarding the provision of schooling within the framework of the Education Acts which are drafted

* The Aston project team has been Sam Comber, Frank Joyce, Bob Meyenn, Colin Sinclair, Margaret Small and Mike Tricker. I here acknowledge their research skills and loyal collaboration; in a real sense they are co-authors of this paper.

and approved by central government at Westminster. While the central Department of Education and Science (DES) gives guidance to LEAs as a whole through memoranda, this guidance rarely goes into detail, since implementation is strictly a matter for each LEA. As far as details of the curriculum are concerned, responsibility is effectively delegated by LEAs to their individual school staffs.

In 1977 DES asked LEAs to review population trends in their own areas in order to consider the possible restructuring of schooling (including nursery education) by assessing costs and benefits on a broad basis. While some further closure and amalgamations of schools seemed very likely, DES recognised that many local factors needed to be taken into account before such action is proposed.

Hitherto all school closures proposed by LEAs have had to be ratified by DES under Section 13 of the 1944 Education Act. The present Conservative government is, however, seriously considering the removal of this requirement as a part of its policy to give more autonomy and accountability to local government, which has some significant but not total responsibility for raising funds for education through the rating (property tax) structure. Over 500 rural primary schools have nevertheless been closed in England during the 1970s continuing a relatively steady trend over the post-war years caused by rural depopulation and changing views of educational standards, in particular with regard to the breadth and variety of curricular activities.

Aims of the Aston Study

Our study arises from three general sets of issues and impacts which surround possible changes in rural primary school provision.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

The school is a social and community asset, and we hypothesise that it has a significant role in stemming rural depopulation and in maintaining a desired social diversification and balance in rural communities. The use made of school buildings for extra-curricular and social activities, the role which these play in the life of the community, and the symbolic and psychological importance of the school building and its staff are of importance here.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

These relate to the level of staffing and other resources provided in the rural primary school, to the quality of pupil experience and to the problems faced by the skills required of the teachers working in these locations.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

These relate not simply to calculations of unit costs of instructing children, but also to the sometimes hidden costs of possible alternative provision and a broader view of the economic and social function of the school in its rural location.

The broad aim of our initial exploratory study is therefore, to gain insight into the

role which rural primary schools play in helping to sustain and maintain viable local communities, and to assess the implications of alternative patterns of schooling so as to provide some basis for comparing specifically educational effects with the broader social and economic issues.

Operationally, this means:

1. assembling information on the structure and form of school/community linkages;
2. describing the character of selected rural primary schools in terms of community involvement, resources, access to school, social interaction of pupils and teachers, character of the curriculum, and unit costs;
3. identifying the scope and variability of problems currently being experienced by LEAs and their policy responses;
4. assessing contemporary attitudes towards educational provision among rural community residents; and
5. exploring the extent to which facilities other than schools might act as a substitute focus for rural community life.

Program of Work and Research Methods

Our project is an interdisciplinary team effort between educators and environmental planners. The research program is divided into three complementary units, each of which is intended to focus in increasing detail upon the interaction between schools and their secondary communities within a representative selection of environmental planning and educational contexts.

Firstly, by means of a detailed postal questionnaire to rurally responsible LEAs, we have endeavoured to survey the national scene with regard to rural primary education within the topics of demographic trends, school closures, size, staffing and buildings policies, finance, and the present (1979) educational structure. This national survey, in which over 80 per cent of LEAs contacted have cooperated, gives details of the extent and variability of the problems presently being experienced and the range of policies implemented or under consideration.

Secondly, we are engaged in a number of cross-community case studies drawn from a matrix and involving twenty-four designated 'parishes' or villages of which ten still have a primary school, and fourteen of which used to have such a school. By using structured interviews and questionnaire-based attitude surveys of teachers, parents and other members of communities, as well as school observation and contextual mapping, we are endeavouring to isolate the impacts of alternative forms of educational reorganisation and provision in a range of planning contexts, ranging from declining remote and sparsely populated areas to some areas close to connubations which are subject to some of the pressures of 'dormitory' growth.

Thirdly, we are monitoring the short-term impacts of the closure in July 1979 of two schools (for details see Table 1). This is a 'before' and 'after' study, including work in the 'host' schools and communities, both before and some months after closure. Again, observation, interviews and questionnaires are being used, and we

hope through these monitoring studies to be able to test inferences regarding the roles of rural schools through comparisons with the cross-community case studies.

All case studies are being drawn from the West Midlands region of England which contains examples of all types of community and educational structures which we feel are relevant. These communities are relatively easily accessible to us by car for fieldwork (within two and a half hours).

It should be appreciated that the English village is, typically, a highly concentrated settlement by Australian standards, and that relatively small distances do create realities, as well as feelings, of isolation. The West Midlands Shire Counties have almost 1400 primary schools of which about 450 have less than 100 children on roll. Of these, the number of those which have about two or less full-time equivalent teachers are distributed as follows:

Number of pupils:	1 to 19	20 to 39	40 to 59
Number of schools:	17	109	127

Some 250 primary school closures have taken place in the region between 1955 and 1978. Within our case studies, almost 1000 interviews are involved in order to sample opinions and perceptions reliably.

Some Initial Findings

In view of the autonomy of LEAs, we have not been surprised to find variations in demographic forecasting techniques and policy guidelines. The precision of forecasting trends in primary school enrolments is problematic on a national scale, particularly since the long term effects of recent improvements in contraceptive techniques is unknown. Difficulties increase the smaller the region being covered, so that fluctuations within particular communities which do not mirror national patterns can have significant implications for local provision. Within the catchment areas of individual rural schools, estimates of school rolls tend to amount to little more than informed guesswork. Some LEAs can operate reasonably accurately in their regions as a whole and all show a significant decline in projected enrolments over the period 1978 to 1982.

The policies of LEAs with regard to school closure are difficult to categorise precisely, but about half treat each case on an individual basis, while two are against any further closures at present pending consideration of wider community aspects. About one third of LEAs treat either twenty or thirty or forty children on roll as a pointer to closure, and there is little doubt that the one teacher school has almost become a feature of the past; presently no more than sixty remain out of a total approaching 20,000 English primary schools. There are indications, however, of a rally of support for the small (more than one teacher) school, and of an increased willingness by authorities to listen to local pressure groups and to try to accommodate their views. Nonetheless, in some areas, any school with less than sixty pupils, and allowed two teachers plus the headteacher, is still subject to careful scrutiny. One authority, interestingly, uses age group (grade) size rather than total size as a criterion; in this case if the mean age group size is nine or ten, and at least one of

Table 1. Two Rural Primary Schools Closed July 1979

Closure Case	A	B
Approximate population served	350	430
Other amenities	Post Office (open one day per week), pub, church, village hall, playing field	PO/shop, service station, furniture mart, gift shop, grocery/newsagent, smithy, two pubs, church
On roll at closure	18	17
Households immediately affected	13/115	11/155
School buildings dating from/condition	1881 (extensions 1932) good repair	1825 (extensions 1867, 1872 and 1893) good repair
Nature of amenities	2 classrooms, no playing field; swimming pool and colour TV (both via PTA)	2 rooms, playing field adjacent; minibus (via PTA)
Capitation for consumables	$450	$650 plus $320 for minibus
Teaching and support staff	Two full time plus aide (15 hr/wk), music specialist (3 hr/wk), secretary (14 hr/wk), cleaner (14 hr/wk), lunch assistant (7 hr/wk)	Headteacher plus aide for 24 hr/wk and visiting violin teacher 3 hr/wk, cleaner
Opposition to closure	Little apart from those employed due to likely educational stimulation at host school	Intense; under threat since 1962
Host schools: rolls and distance	68; 4½ miles	80; 3 miles

three further factors is likely to arise within five years (resignation/retirement of headteacher, heavy expenditure on maintenance/repair of buildings, satisfactory alternative accommodation/school for children) then the school is proposed for closure.

LEAs surveyed vary in their proportions of rural population and the proportion of their rural primary schools varies between 12 and 80 per cent. A large proportion (about one third) of rural schools have a staffing complement of six or more, probably reflecting an aim to provide one teacher for each grade level over the primary years (ages 5 to 11). It needs to be noted that for the purposes of our national survey we asked LEAs to assume that a rural primary school was one located in areas of scattered development as well as free-standing hamlets, villages and small towns, serving a population of 10,000 or less. This represents a large difference in scale compared with Australia, or even Scotland.

There seems considerable uncertainty among teachers regarding the critical numbers of pupils on roll below which the child's education and development of social relationships is likely to suffer. Educational evidence and experience on its own, not however adequately research-based, suggests the following minima for viability:

1. Nursery (3 to 5 age range) plus infants (5 to 7) of about fifteen pupils, one teacher and a nursery assistant.
2. First School with age range 4 to 9 of about thirty pupils, two teachers and a nursery assistant. (Some LEAs have 'middle schools', generally for pupils aged 9 to 13.)
3. Primary School with age range 5 to 11 of about forty-five pupils and three teachers.

Teacher quality is felt to be a crucial factor in the small school and few gain specific help during their training for the particular demands and opportunities of the rural setting. The rural primary school teacher in England, unlike the Australian counterpart, tends to be relatively immobile and insulated professionally, and whilst this tends to give stability and continuity it can also result in stagnation. Schools and their staffs in adjacent villages tend not to interact and often only meet in area sporting competitions.

Possible Policy Implications

In the past, rationalisations of educational provision, and indeed of other human services, including post-offices, shops, health and library services, have been largely carried out in an *ad hoc* fashion with little prior research into the likely outcomes of different options. Not surprisingly many have led to considerable local acrimony, which is difficult to appease when there appears to be no rationale other than a crude economic one, based almost solely upon unit educational costs rather than upon a broader and more sensitive economic and social analysis. There is always a temptation for educational administrators, particularly when working in relative isolation from other service managers, to sacrifice long-term improvement for short-

term expediency. This points to the need for detailed research to help inform and promote compromise solutions which satisfy the requirement of efficient resource utilisation while providing continued support for rural communities.

A range of social judgements is inevitably involved in these matters. However, the dilemmas are not adequately resolvable unless the broader social, community, and economic roles which schools play in rural areas are more fully understood. Then the wider costs and benefits of particular policies can be evaluated.

From the Aston-based work it is hoped that it will be possible to delineate for educational policy makers and environmental planners a range of options which will assist the processes of decision-making in contrasting contexts. It must be emphasised however, that we are *not* engaged in rural advocacy for its own sake, and our writ does not include detailed attention to educational output. More simply, our work is an initial attempt to understand a complex scenario which has elements of situational specificity, and one project will by no means furnish all the necessary understanding.

Our central recommendation seems likely to point to the need for greater co-ordination in planning the provision of services in rural areas, it being imperative to consider educational provision as an integral part of rural settlement planning and rural socioeconomic development. Other recommendations will include the need for LEAs to develop coherent policies for the community use of rural schools and to increase school permeability and openness. Where further school closures are involved, there will need to be wider consultation, with more thought about compensating communities for any lost investments, and about developing new communal links between residents of the enlarged catchment areas.

Postcript (April 1981)

Since the preparation of this paper for the Perth conference, data collection and analysis for the project has been completed, and the final project report is almost ready for publication. It is neither appropriate nor possible here to repeat the contents of that report, but the balance of evidence suggests that, in the context of England, rural school closures are not necessarily crucial indicators for rural decline and depopulation; other more powerful forces determine that. The social and community roles of rural schools vary enormously, depending not simply upon the locational and resource characteristics of the schools and the disposition of the teaching staff, but also upon the spatial and social characteristics of their communities and the nature of other village facilities.

As far as schoolchildren are concerned, the effects of closures seem short-term, and pupils soon adjust to their 'host' school environments with, on balance, some likely curricular advantages. Parental anxieties also seem to evaporate relatively swiftly as they observe the usually happy educational adjustment of their children. Community adjustment to closure varies, depending upon the traditions of community use of school buildings and the availability of alternative venues for social activities. Some social disadvantage occurs on school closure, but it is differential, and seems to depend mainly upon individuals' access to independent transport.

'Broad brush' policies for school closure and reorganisation thus seem inappropriate, but the team have found little evidence for insensitive action by 'distant educational bureaucrats' as far as rural school closures in England are concerned over recent years. Rural pressure groups may well have influenced the contemporary styles of decision-making about closures, but parts of their present case regarding social and educational disadvantage seem to be overstated, that is *if* patterns of social ***behaviour, rather than feelings*** of loss are held to be the only viable basis for accountable policy making with restricted resources. The deepening economic recession presently requires the ever more careful disposal of those resources, and this could result in a new wave of rural school closures. Bearing in mind past consolidations in England, and the limited scope for the further mechanisation of agriculture, there will be considerably fewer opportunities for justified rationalisation of educational provision than hitherto.

The English village school is a declining feature within our heritage and it has changed considerably from former times. Those which still remain are generally thriving educationally and providing useful services to rural communities. Few of those which have closed will reopen during this century, but futurists might contemplate one day a return by many to peasant farming as urban pressures and lifestyles become intolerable, and as the balance of convenient energy sources changes. Or perhaps many will simply decide to spend their days of the post-industrial, educational and leisurite society in the countryside. Then, who knows, the rural school closures of the twentieth century may need to be reversed, for hitherto the growth and decline of the education service has followed other more pervasive social movements.

Meanwhile the need to manage the remaining small schools efficiently remains. Hence a complementary study which would focus much more specifically upon the quality of educational experiences in small, two to three teacher rural schools, including the ranges of performance experiences, has been planned in liaison with LEA personnel who feel that data is lacking in that specific area. This study, which is designed to influence the day-to-day practice of two and three teacher schools, now regrettably awaits a more sympathetic economic climate for central government funding.

FURTHER SOURCES

Comber, L. C., 'Education in Rural Areas and the Problem of School Closures', background paper December, 1978.

Project First Interim Report, April 1979.

Project Second Interim Report, March 1980.

Project Final Report, May 1981; this is written as a free standing document but does not contain much of the detailed data published in the two prior interim reports.

PART THREE

The Community Situation

Declining Enrolments—Implications for Rural Schools: A Case Study from South Australia

GLEN P. EDWARDS

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Declining Enrolments Implications for Rural Schools: A Case Study from South Australia*

South Australia has a population of approximately 1,400,000 people. Sixty-eight point nine per cent live in Adelaide, 16 per cent live in large rural towns and cities and 15.1 per cent live in smaller rural communities. Of the large rural communities only one has a population greater than 30,000, four have populations of greater than 10,000 and forty-four have populations between 1,000 and 10,000, of these forty have populations of approximately 2,000 people. In general, the population of South Australia is concentrated in the Adelaide Plains, South East, Upper Murray, Upper Spencer Gulf and Lower Eyre Peninsula Regions. This leaves approximately 15 per cent of the population spread over 90 per cent of the remaining area of the State.

The extremely isolated students and those students who do not have ready access to senior secondary schooling attend thirty-seven schools around the State. This group of children represents approximately one per cent of the school-going population.

The State's correspondence school has 960 students on the roll, 312 of whom could be regarded as being on correspondence due to their extreme isolation.

The State, therefore, has a high concentration of population in Adelaide and a number of large rural cities and towns. Approximately 14 per cent of the population live in country towns of approximately 2,000 people, and the percentage of the population that is extremely isolated is quite small.

The Decline Situation

Following the second World War the school population in South Australia was characterised by rapid growth which continued until the mid-seventies. Since that time it has gone into a steady decline that is expected to continue for at least the next decade.

Year	*Total*	*Secondary*
1945	70,000	11,000
1955	130,000	19,000
1965	200,000	57,000
1975	234,700	83,000
1979	224,500	77,700
1984	208,000*	77,000†

* The material for this paper arose out of a three-day conference held in South Australia that looked at the problems that may result from declining school enrolments in that State. I have drawn on the figures made available at that conference and used them to provide a 'case study' for discussion.

† Projected figures.

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During the growth years there was a desperate shortage of teachers and the number of teacher training institutions grew from one to five. The inertia behind this growth has been such that teacher numbers have continued to grow during the past four years whilst student numbers have actually declined.

Year	*Teacher Numbers (Full-time equivalents)*
1971	11,600
1975	13,650
1979	15,200

South Australia, therefore, is faced with a declining school population and this has a number of dramatic implications should educational funding start to reflect that decline. If staff/student ratios remained as they are for this year then the State school system could afford to lose the services of 1,000 teachers during the next ten years, or, in effect, lose sufficient students to fill forty schools each with an enrolment of 500 pupils. To date, teacher numbers and government expenditure have continued to increase.

Expenditure on Education

Year	*Per cent of Total State Revenue*
1969/70	17.38
1974/75	22.14
1977/78	24.91

The State is faced with an exceptionally tight staffing situation that allows for very little flexibility of movement by transfers and promotions. Teachers are tending to hold their positions in the department now that the opportunities to resign and re-enter the teaching force are rapidly diminishing.

Teacher Loss Rate

Year	*Primary* %	*Secondary* %
1972	14.6	12.7
1974	12.6	8.8
1978	5.8	4.8

The system has, therefore, a very young teaching force that has, within the past three years, stabilized in quite a dramatic fashion by comparison with the previous thirty years.

Age Profile of Teachers

Age	*Total*
20-24	3,617
25-29	4,059
30-34	2,659
35-39	1,475
40-44	746
45-49	671
50-54	586
55-59	478
60-64	199

Promotion opportunities within the department have virtually ended. This is in marked contrast to the careers of teachers aged forty and above who, during recent decades, have had available to them many opportunities for quick promotion.

In South Australia teachers are able to be assessed for eligibility for inclusion on a promotion list for the position to which they aspire. Positions on this list are determined by a number of factors and promotion positions are filled by making offers to people, starting from the top of the list, until that position has been accepted. This system has worked well since it commenced in 1971 but has rapidly bogged down in recent years.

Promotion Opportunities

	Numbers On Eligibility Lists (1979)	*Numbers Promoted (1978-79)*
Deputy Principal—Primary	724	2
Deputy Principal—Secondary	332	10
Senior Masters (Maths/Science)	341	9
Total on lists	4,077	108

New strategies to fill approximately half of the promotion vacancies by open application from those on the promotion lists has brought some flexibility but it is clear that we will need to review this method of promoting teachers and, indeed, may need to look at the whole matter of the structure of senior staff positions, in the light of the stability that now faces us.

During recent years the training colleges have continued to produce teachers at rates that have rapidly exceeded the demand for their services.

Applicants for Permanent Teaching Positions

Year	*Applicants*	*Appointments*
1978	2,297	1,066
1979	2,585	697

Implications

Before commenting on the effects of these trends on rural schools I think that I should clarify the background against which my comments will be made. There are other issues that cannot be ignored which may, in fact, be of more significance to the future of children in rural schools. Because the theme of this talk is the effects on rural schools of a declining population I may appear to be highlighting some issues that are, in fact, less significant than others that are not closely connected with the topic. I refer to such matters as the impact of technological change, the energy crisis and, particularly, the matter of unemployment.

Unemployment has been shown to affect our young people, the less well educated, the unskilled, migrants, females, Aborigines and people in rural areas.

In South Australia the unemployment rate for children between fifteen and twenty is the highest in Australia and opinion is that this would be even higher if the hidden unemployment in country areas was made known. It could be therefore, that unemployment, in particular, will be of more significance to our schools than some of the issues contained in this paper.

I am guessing also that the generally accepted concerns of rural education are also taken as read. I refer to such problems as the restricted peer group structure, lower career aspirations, earlier school leaver pattern, the need to move out of a home district to pursue an education or a career, restricted career options, lower entry rates to tertiary institutions, a younger teaching force with an above average turnover and so on. What is yet to be clarified is whether a downturn in enrolments actually generates a new set of problems or simply makes worse existing ones.

What is important, however, is that, given the present downturn and given that hard financial decisions may need to be made, it will be necessary for those concerned with education in rural areas to compete for priorities in funding in the decline situation. We are all aware that it is a more expensive proposition to provide an equal service to rural schools and to allow for equal opportunities for students in these schools.

Against this background, therefore, I wish to examine the implications of the declining enrolments for the three main resources available to students, namely, teachers, physical facilities and school curricula.

Teachers

The teaching force is still the main resource available to students. More than 85 per cent of the South Australian educational budget goes towards salaries and so any significant cutback in educational funding to match declining enrolments must have an implication on the number of teachers that can be employed.

We may be required either to bring about a downturn in teacher numbers or to create as many teaching positions as possible within a stable or decreasing staffing budget.

Obviously a moratorium on the employment of teachers would contribute to the solution as would an acceleration of the normal loss of teachers through retirement

or resignation by the encouragement of earlier retirement. The figures show, however, that the latter possibly would not become significant for another fifteen years.

Additional teaching positions can be created through a number of strategies and permanent part-time teaching is already a reality in South Australia. This has been shown to meet the particular needs of many married female teachers but alternative approaches to this may be necessary to attract a broader section of the teaching force. One scheme that may have merit is the Ontario scheme where teachers receive four-fifths of a normal full salary and take one year off in each five on that salary.

Additional temporary teaching positions can also be made available in the form of contract teaching for periods of three or four weeks up to a full year. These positions are used to replace teachers on accouchement leave, leave without pay or study leave. During this year my department has been able to make work available for a significant number of teachers by covering the absence of approximately 1,000 teachers who are on leave for these reasons. Permanency is not guaranteed, and the presence of this mobile group of virtually beginning teachers is posing unique induction and inservicing problems.

The hard facts are that student numbers are declining, that there is not a large resignation or retirement rate and that the profession is now in an unaccustomed stable situation. These factors are producing an uncertainty that may well have an influence on teacher morale as anticipated transfer and promotion opportunities are not made available and rumours about possible retrenchments increase. We were faced with many problems during the years of rapid growth but there was, at the least, a variety and freshness in the teaching force that made for significant change and innovation. It may now be necessary to develop other means of generating vitality should the new stability stifle this.

It may be necessary to develop strategies such as job rotation, increased study-leave opportunities, new approaches to promotion procedures and the setting up of conditions for easier release from and return to a permanent teaching career. It is also clear that we will need to re-examine our management styles in schools so that an alert and professionally active teaching force can be maintained.

Rural schools, of course, have made some gains from this stability. The previously exceptionally high levels of teacher turnover have reduced dramatically and country schools, at least in South Australia, now have a continuity in their teaching staffs that was not previously available.

Years ago teachers who reluctantly accepted country appointments knew that they would be able to return to the metropolitan area after a maximum of three years' teaching in country areas. Many teachers, indeed, refused country appointments but, because of the shortage of adequately trained teachers during the sixties, were still granted appointments in metropolitan areas.

The competition for teaching positions that is now with us has enabled us to select exceptionally qualified teachers with a high potential for success. Almost all of these teachers, however, have to indicate an acceptance of a country appointment if they are to be allocated a teaching position.

This has meant that, in recent years, country areas have been receiving a high quality sample of beginning teachers but a very large proportion of these have

accepted appointments in communities that are completely strange and alien to their metropolitan background. The social adjustment that has been necessary has often had a significant influence on these teachers' effectiveness and a number have resigned rather than continue teaching.

This has implications for our pre-service, selection and induction procedures, given the fact that we can now be relatively sure that all new appointees will be required to take up teaching appointments in country areas.

Reluctance to accept country appointments is also evident amongst teachers eligible for promotion. Virtually all metropolitan promotion vacancies are filled by transferees, most of whom come from country areas. This means that teachers accepting promotion positions almost inveitably have to move to a country vacancy. Many teachers are choosing to remain at their present level in the metropolitan area rather than risk a long term stay in a promotion position in the country. This was not apparent years ago when the same group of teachers would have readily spent three years in a country town, knowing that they could ultimately return to the metropolitan area.

This reluctance is illustrated in our staffing for the 1980 school year. To fill a Principal II vacancy in a secondary school in a very pleasant country town we are presently down to the thirty-fifth position on the promotion list without yet having had an acceptance. Similarly a vacancy for Principal II, primary, in a small country town has not yet been accepted by the first fifty-one people on the promotion list.

So stable has the situation become that there is an over supply of senior teachers in the metropolitan area as student numbers have decreased more rapidly than can be coped with by the natural turnover of teachers in these positions. This has made it very difficult for us to guarantee success in transfer applications for any but those teachers in extremely isolated schools, such as the far north Aboriginal schools and those in the far-north mining towns.

The incentive to accept a country appointment was for many teachers more rapid promotion. This is no longer so. Our department is now trying to identify what factors will act as an incentive for teachers to accept country appointments. These factors will become more significant in future years when teachers may need to be relocated to country areas if an over supply of teachers occurs in Adelaide.

At present, teachers in country areas have access to teacher housing authority accommodation which has a 20 per cent subsidy on normally accepted rental levels. Teachers have not seen this to be an incentive, as inflationary trends have resulted in many teachers choosing to buy their own houses rather than rent at these lower levels.

Other industrial incentives are available such as locality allowances, priority in transfer applications and a reasonably generous reimbursement of costs for teachers requiring medical services for themselves or their families. These have, in fact, been perceived more as overcoming the disadvantages of an appointment to a country area rather than as an actual incentive.

In professional matters country teachers have been reasonably well served through regional support services such as advisory teachers, guidance officers, speech pathologists and social workers. In an area where teachers often do not have

access to the variety of support services that is taken for granted in the metropolitan area it may well be that, in the time of a more generous supply of teachers, these services can be increased. To maintain these services, however, it will be necessary to allocate a significant travel and accommodation budget, both of which will place an increasing strain on stable or declining budgetary allocations. What will be important is that, should significant cutbacks take place, the reduction of these services is not seen as a simple method of reducing costs whilst still maintaining classroom-teacher numbers.

Although there is an extensive external studies service available to teachers in South Australia they still prefer to transfer to the metropolitan area in order to study full- or part-time at a tertiary institution. Given the new stability it will be important for teachers in rural areas to have an even more effective external studies service so that they are not disadvantaged by comparison with their metropolitan counterparts, the lack of demand for teacher trainees from the colleges of advanced education is, no doubt, putting a strain on the very existence of these institutions and the time seems ripe for them to direct their resources into this area to meet and service this emerging demand.

Should it become necessary to compulsorily relocate teachers from the metropolitan area or to insist on compulsory country service before promotion or transfer to the metropolitan area, country communities may well find themselves dealing with reluctant appointees to their schools. This has implications for our inservicing and preservicing programs and, I suspect, has implications for the rural communities themselves, which will be required to play a significant role in keeping these teachers professionally effective by satisfying their pastoral and social needs.

Capital and Equipment

Stability of funding in education will have implications in the facilities area. The cost for new schools is still escalating rapidly and, like many states no doubt, South Australia has a large backlog of upgrading to be done that results from the many years of rapid growth and consequent provision of so-called 'temporary accommodation'. Many of the schools requiring upgrading are in rural areas.

Ironically enough, the number of students in rural schools of South Australia has remained relatively stable during recent years and so there is no hard evidence of a significant rural decline. There is certainly a rural consolidation taking place as many very small communities are moving to the larger towns or rural cities. Some of these trends are relatively predictable such as is occurring along the Transcontinental Railway Line and the new Northern Line where ANR is consolidating its service centres. Similarly, the possibility of petrochemical plants and mining developments in the central areas of the State make some forward planning possible. Even then, we are not sure whether these developments will provide a population shift within the State or a movement of population from other States.

Other rural movements in the more closely settled areas are less obvious. We have coped with these in the past by closing and opening many small schools but evidence shows that the opportunity for any further consolidation is minimal. During the

years 1941-1970 school closures in South Australia averaged twenty-one schools per year. During the years 1971-1978 an average of only five schools per year were closed. In the past two years only one school has been closed in the country. Most other closures have been due to the consolidation of schools in the metropolitan area.

Even if one took a most optimistic viewpoint on the possibility of further closure of smaller rural schools only twenty such schools could be identified. One could even question now whether we have gone too far along the road of consolidation. Quite apart from the educational value of small rural schools it can be shown that there is not a significant economic gain in a massive consolidation program. The provision of alternative educational offerings to the students or the transport of those students to nearby schools rapidly erodes whatever savings are made.

Because of South Australia's consolidation program in past years we now run 692 departmental or chartered buses each day to transport 25,514 students to 350 schools. These buses cover a total distance of approximately 72,500 kms per day at a cost of approximately $28,600. Indeed one could postulate that rapidly escalating transport costs could be a real incentive for the re-establishment of rural townships and schools.

The time must come when people living in rural areas find it more economical to again shop at the local store rather than travel many miles to the larger townships. The possibilities are interesting to contemplate and, no doubt, having seen small country towns die when the school was closed, we may see a regrowth of such communities should it become more economical to re-establish small schools rather than transport students to the larger centres.

A recent OECD paper on education and local government has, as one of its major hypotheses, the thought that the strategy of using education as a means of promoting individual mobility out of rural communities may well have reached the point of diminishing returns. If work is not available outside the rural community there will be less incentive for young people to leave. Two implications of these were postulated. The first is that the more highly educated children will tend to remain in their local communities and that this may have implications for the communities themselves in coping with this trend. The second implication is that, in the past, we have tended to give our rural education an urban emphasis so that children from rural areas can cope with a transfer to metropolitan areas. Should this trend not be apparent in the future it should have an implication on the type of curricula that we devise for rural students who will, in the main, remain in rural areas.

The situation raises, it seems, a whole series of questions about optimum school size, adequate and appropriate curricula and the provision of useful options for students requiring to further their education apart from the traditional alternatives of correspondence lessons, bussing, or the use of board and hostels.

Curricula and Teaching Strategies

There is a danger that, when concentrating on problems such as this, we tend to look at only the management and industrial implications.

We cannot overlook the educational provision that we are making for our students and this stability should be providing an excellent opportunity for us to cope with the change and innovation that we were unable to handle during the years of hectic and rapid growth. Indeed, South Australia now has the best staffing provision that it has probably had throughout the past 100 years.

The rapidly changing social and economic situation must have significant implications for what we are doing in our schools and we are probably in a better position than we have been for many years, in terms of personnel resources, to cope with these problems. We should not allow, therefore, a stable or even a downturn situation to blind us to the possibility of working on other curriculum strategies. The matter of pre-school education, the broadening of curriculum offerings, the transition from school to work can, and should, be taken up in a way that was not possible years ago.

It is now far more realistic for us to take a more serious look at other alternatives such as altering the range of compulsory attendance, 'whole of life' learning de-institutionalising schooling, greater community participation in curriculum development, vocational training, apprenticeship schemes and alternative access to learning through correspondence, radio and television.

What is clear is that our present processes can be improved and that schools are now finding it difficult to adjust quickly enough to the new societal challenges that face them. In taking up rural prospectives on this it will be important that urban models are not set up for rural schools. This raises the question of whether there are unique features to education in rural areas to which we should address ourselves. Do we continue to educate children on the assumption that they may need to transfer to urban areas? If children tend to remain in rural areas what obligation does this have for schools to create an awareness beyond the local community and what implication does this have for the development of curricula to meet local needs?

One trend that seems to be apparent in South Australia is that the proportion of itinerant families has increased steadily over recent years. This has become a factor in certain rural areas such as the Murray River irrigation areas, the railway line towns and the northern mining towns. Our correspondence school, for example, deals with an annual enrolment that fluctuates between approximately 960 and 1,050. A big part of this fluctuation is due to the itinerant nature of many of the students that it serves. Approximately 16 per cent of the school's clientele are itinerant and this has increased slowly but steadily over recent years. The mobile student has not received much attention in the past. The time may now be appropriate for this to be thoroughly examined.

In South Australia we are encouraging schools to undertake school-based curriculum development using the support of our central curriculum directorate and the extensive network of advisory teachers. We have, for many years, encouraged parents to become involved, through their school councils, in their school's curriculum planning.

Parents in rural areas have tended to be more cautious in taking up this opportunity as they lack the confidence to influence the professional activities of their schools. There will be, I think, a real challenge for administrators and teachers to

work with their communities in developing an appropriate curriculum offering that has sufficient breadth and depth to meet the unique needs of children in rural areas.

In South Australia we face this particular problem in our small, isolated area schools and special rural schools which have a very small secondary component added to a primary offering. Some of these schools have been hardest hit by declining enrolments and it has been difficult to satisfactorily reduce what is already a restricted curriculum offering. One approach that is working well is the provision of itinerant teachers in such subjects as drama, art, and craft. These serve a number of small rural schools which cannot, otherwise, broaden their curriculum offering because of the small size of their staff. This is expensive in terms of travel and most demanding on the teachers involved. Educationally, however, they provide an excellent service in an area where face to face contact with a teacher is far more effective than any other approach.

Summary

What I have tried to do is to describe the situation in South Australia and to point to some of the areas of concern that are occupying our minds. I have hinted at some alternative solutions but, for the purposes of discussion, I have tended to emphasise the problems, rather than possible solutions.

By way of summary then, I make the following observations.

Declining enrolments pose problems that are societal problems as well as schooling problems. Indeed, one could postulate that the problem of declining enrolments is only a subset of the broader societal problem that faces us and that the problems of youth unemployment may well pose a more significant challenge to our schooling system than those that I have outlined in this paper. What is clear is that school systems cannot solve these in isolation. It will be important for mechanisms to be set up so that schools can work with parents, communities and other agencies on broadly based solutions.

During what is, and what will continue to be for many years, a period of uncertainty, it is going to become important for schools, teachers, parents and the community to be aware of the facts. Informed debate is going to be vital and the promulgation of the appropriate information to those who should have it will be a necessary first step in this progress.

What may be more important, in fact, will be the way in which we make our decisions rather than the decisions that we will actually make.

Whatever decisions are made, experience has shown that these will need to be modified to meet a changing situation and so the processes that we set up will need to be ongoing, flexible and capable of relatively rapid alteration.

PART FOUR

The Financial Situation

Extraordinary financial needs for rural education are implicit in nearly all papers in this book. When new ideas for rural education are set forth they may eventually stand or fall in terms of cost, regardless of their merits. It is desirable, therefore, to have a fairly broad understanding of the financial situation in rural education.

The four papers in Part Four have been selected for this purpose. They are arranged according to the general plan of the book where the most general topic is presented first and the most specific last. Thus, in the first paper, the role of the Commonwealth in financing education is explained, followed by a paper that deals with school finance in a specific State (Western Australia). The last two papers go into financial issues concerned with the effects of sparsity of population on unit costs of education services, the cost efficiency of rural school consolidation and living-away-from-home allowances for isolated families.

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PART FOUR

The Financial Situation

Financing Rural Education in Australia: A Commonwealth Perspective

PETER D. TANNOCK

Financing Rural Education in Australia: A Commonwealth Perspective

This background paper does not attempt to give a comprehensive picture of the financial structure of rural education in Australia, nor to present an interpretation of Commonwealth government education policies as they apply to rural education. However, it does attempt to set out in broad detail my view of some aspects of the emerging role of the Commonwealth in education, with particular emphasis on its financial role, and to delineate the financial and related dimensions of some Commonwealth programs directed at rural education.

Before considering specific matters of educational finance, it is relevant to make some general observations about the structure of the Australian federal system as a whole. This structure is a vital element in the capacity of the States, and of private authorities, to provide educational services in both rural and urban areas, and has also been instrumental in the relatively recent large-scale thrust of the Federal government into the education policy area. Important elements of the current Australian federal system which have relevance for any consideration of specific aspects of education finance include statutory provision for intergovernmental tax-sharing arrangements (whereby the States receive a fixed share of income tax revenue), the systematic correction of fiscal inequalities between States (formalised through the operation of the Grants Commission), the coordination (through the Australian Loan Council) of governmental borrowing, and the 'systematic evaluation of needs in a wide range of public expenditure functions'.[1]

The emergence of the Federal government as an evaluator of what are often referred to as 'needs' in areas which have been the traditional consitutional preserves of the States has been an important development in Australian federalism. The Grants Commission, of course, although primarily designed (in 1933) to achieve fiscal equalisation between the stronger and weaker States, acted from the beginning as a significant standardising force in Australian social policy, and has had the effect of ensuring that equal fiscal capacity between the States means, in practice, largely the provision of roughly comparable educational services.[2] This has certainly been apparent in the provision of rural education services.

The Grants Commission also served as an early and enduring example of the effects which the Commonwealth could achieve through specific-purpose payments to the States. The area of education policy, perhaps more than any other over a

[1] Russell Mathews, 'Innovations and Developments in Australian Federalism, *Publius*, Temple University, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1977, p. 9.

[2] An account of this phenomenon can be seen in P. J. Jones, 'The Influence of the Commonwealth Grants Commission on Education Policy in the Claimant States', PhD thesis, University of Western Australia, 1978.

lengthy period of time, has been subject to specific Commonwealth influence through Section 96 conditional grants. The major agencies now in the field are the Tertiary Education Commission and the Schools Commission, with the Commonwealth Department of Education performing the unobtrusive but powerful co-ordinating and 'final source of advice' role.

Australia has gone through several phases of federalism since its establishment as a nation. The literature refers to such phases as 'coordinate, cooperative and coercive, federalism. In the post-war period, following uniform taxation and the changing structure of its political-fiscal system, it has experienced largely what Mathews calls 'coercive federalism', 'whereby financial domination by the Commonwealth government was associated with a growing incursion into State spheres of responsibility'.[3] Although the last few years have seen something of a softening of this trend it seems probable to me that what we are seeing at present is largely a consolidation of the relative positions staked out by Commonwealth and State governments in the 'coercive federalism' period in such areas of responsibility as education. While there is now ample evidence of cooperative policy development between the levels of government, and an increasing commonality of goals which reaches across political boundaries, there is no indication that the Commonwealth is contemplating even partial withdrawal from its present involvement in Australia's educational enterprise. What, then, is the (emerging) role of the Commonwealth in education in Australia, especially at the school level?

It is not easy to identify a precise set of educational objectives adopted by Commonwealth governments in the last decade. This is partly because we have had a number of changes of government. It is partly because there have been different elements of government involved in formulating policy, or policy recommendations, at the national level, and it is not always clear who stands for what. However, resource allocations do point to some clearly stated or emerging objectives:

1. Supporting the provision by the States and private authorities of basic education services to a desirable standard for all Australian children.

   Examples of programs directed at this objective are the Schools Commission's General Recurrent and Capital Grants Programs for government and non-government schools,[4] its 'joint' program for the in-service education of teachers and much of the expenditure incurred under its 'special projects' program.

2. Making special provision for servicing the additional educational needs of particular groups in the population, especially those for which the Commonwealth bears special constitutional responsibility (migrants, refugees, Aborigines).

   Examples of programs directed at this objective are the Refugee Contingency Programs and the Schools Commission's Migrant Education, Disadvantaged Schools and Special Education Programs for government and

[3] Mathews, *op. cit.*, p. 13

[4] Senator J. L. Carrick, Minister for Education, Ministerial Statement, 16 Oct. 1979, 'Programs of the Education Commissions for 1980', *Senate Debates*, S.82, 21 Aug.-18 Oct. 1979, pp. 1325-1332.

non-government schools, and its joint programs for children from multicultural backgrounds, for disadvantaged country areas, and for institutionalised children.[5]

3. Providing benefits to individuals which enhance their capacity to take advantage of available educational services (for example, living allowances, fee supplements and other forms of student benefits).

   Examples of programs directed at this objective are the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme, which provides a living allowance, and a books, clothing and personal allowance for about 15,000 Aboriginal secondary school students; the Secondary Allowance Scheme, which provides financial assistance for parents on low incomes to help them maintain their children at schools for years eleven and twelve. (In 1978 maximum benefit was $550 for a maximum adjusted family income of $5,800. There were 19,195 beneficiaries.); and the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme, which provides financial assistance in the form of boarding, correspondence and second home allowances to the parents of isolated children. (During 1978 there were 19,500 beneficiaries of this scheme, with a maximum benefit of $1,550 for a senior secondary student with an adjusted family income of $5,800.)[6]

What emerges from this brief analysis of the objectives and practical role of the Commonwealth in Australian education is a number of important issues or questions:

If the Commonwealth is to continue to act (or to seek to act) as a guarantor of the basic standard of educational services of children in Australian schools,

- what standards should be adopted, how will they be determined, when will they be revised, how will performance against them be evaluated, and how can political and financial responsibilities be reasonably shared between the various providing parties?

These questions of standards, responsibility, and accountability represent complex issues in our federal system.

If the Commonwealth is to continue its role as provider of supplements to the additional educational services required by special groups (or 'special populations' as they are sometimes called),

- how are the competing claims of such groups for special educational services to be identified and equitably dealt with?
- what should be the size and duration of such special purposes programs?
- how can their effectiveness be judged?

[5] Carrick, *op. cit.*
[6] Commonwealth Department of Education, *Annual Report 1978*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1979.

If the Commonwealth is to maintain or develop its 'benefits to students' role,

- how can the competing claims of individuals for the payment of allowances for educational purposes be identified and equitably dealt with?
- how can allowances be adapted to changing social, economic and educational circumstances?
- what should be the relationship between Commonwealth benefits directed at individual students and the provision of educational services by State and private authorities?

In the second half of this paper, I propose to look briefly at the overall financing of school-level education in Australia, and then at a few issues which arise out of specific Commonwealth programs which have particular implications for the financing of rural education.

The purpose of this brief review is not to describe the programs in detail, but rather to focus on some aspects which have particular relevance for a consideration of the financing of rural education in Australia. It should be apparent that the Commonwealth would not regard these programs as the sole source of its support for rural education. It would argue that all the Schools Commission programs both general and specific purpose, have direct benefits for rural schools, as do its student assistance programs, its support for educational research (mainly through ERDC) and curriculum development (through CDC), and its promotion of national inquiries into important educational issues (such as teacher education). From this perspective, the Commonwealth has a significant, if somewhat amorphous, set of responsibilities in respect of rural education throughout Australia.

School Finance in Australia[7]

The most recent estimate of the cost of providing primary and secondary education for children in Australia is $4,100 million for the financial year 1977/78. Expenditure in government schools was estimated at $3,500 million of which 87 per cent was devoted to recurrent and 13 per cent to capital expenditure. Seventy-five per cent of recurrent expenditure in government schools is devoted to teachers' salaries. The national average expenditure in government schools in 1977/78 was $977 per primary pupil and $1,561 per secondary pupil.

Expenditure on non-government schools in Australia in 1977/78 was approximately $600 million. If non-government schools are divided into the categories of Catholic and other independent schools, some variations emerge in the patterns of finance. Teachers' salaries account for three-quarters of current expenditure in Catholic schools but a smaller proportion (59 to 70 per cent) in other non-government schools. In Catholic schools average per student running costs, including pro-

[7] Much of the information presented here is derived from the Schools Commission's statistical compendium, *Australian Students and Their Schools*, Canberra: Schools Commission, 1979.

vision for contributed services and debt servicing, were $642 per student in 1977, or 72 per cent of government primary school running costs in 1976/77 and $995 per student in secondary schools, 70 per cent of equivalent government costs. In non-Catholic non-government schools, per student running costs were $910 at the primary level, or 102 per cent of government primary costs, and $1,495 in secondary schools or 105 per cent of government secondary costs. There are considerable differences in operating costs among individual non-government schools within the two groups.

The major sources of finance for schools in Australia are State governments, the Commonwealth government and private contributions in cash or kind. State governments reported expenditure of $3,422 million on their government schools in 1977-1978. In that year the Commonwealth provided $387 million or 11 per cent of total expenditures in government schools. In addition government schools received the benefit of $20-$30 million through the operation of Commonwealth joint programs for government and non-government schools and other programs for Aboriginal and child migrant education. The remaining 88 per cent of expenditure was financed from States' general revenue and loan funds.

The Commonwealth was also responsible for the expenditure of $140 million in respect of government schools in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.

The Commonwealth provided over $240 million in 1977/78 for non-government schools. In the same year, State governments provided $165 million for non-government schools. Fees and other income from private sources contributed well over $250 million in 1977/78 to non-government schools. Dependence on government support varies widely among non-government schools. The range of tuition fees charged was from fifty dollars to nearly $2,000 per student in 1977, and in boarding schools, additional fees for boarding ranged from under $200 to over $2,000.

As has been noted earlier, running costs per student in Catholic primary schools were 72 per cent of government school running costs in 1977. An average amount equal to 31 per cent of government school running costs was met from Commonwealth recurrent grants; State sources provided the equivalent of 15 per cent and the remaining 26 per cent was met from private sources including contributed services. The proportionate contribution from each of these sources in Catholic secondary schools was similar to that in primary schools.

In other non-government schools, Commonwealth contributions were the equivalent of 19 per cent and 17 per cent of government costs in primary and secondary schools respectively. States provided the equivalent of 16 per cent and 17 per cent and the equivalent of 67 per cent and 71 per cent was provided from private sources including contributed services.

Contributions from government sources to non-government schools increased considerably between 1974 and 1977. Discounting the effects of inflation, Commonwealth contributions increased by 74 per cent in Catholic primary schools, 89 per cent in Catholic secondary schools, 74 per cent in other non-government primary schools and 56 per cent in other non-government secondary schools. State contribu-

tions increased by 37 and 56 per cent respectively in Catholic and other non-government primary schools and 69 and 86 per cent at the secondary level.[8]

A number of issues arising from particular Commonwealth education programs suggest themselves for discussion in the context of the needs and problems of rural areas.

General Resources Programs

Under these programs, the Commonwealth through the Schools Commission, provides general recurrent and capital grants to the States for expenditure in government and non-government schools.[9]

GENERAL RECURRENT GRANTS FOR GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

General recurrent grants for government schools are calculated on a per capita basis, and are distributed between the States in accordance with the latest available enrolment figures. The per capita allocations for 1980 are seventy-eight dollars eighteen cents per primary student and ninety-four dollars fourteen cents per secondary student. These seemingly arbitrary amounts raise such broad questions as whether the per capita amounts should bear a relationship to particular Commonwealth objectives, and whether there ought to be such a differentiation between allocations for primary and secondary education. In the context of rural education, and the equity of the distribution between States, they raise specific questions of whether or not consideration should be given to a 'loading' for States which incur extraordinary expenditures associated with maintaining high-cost rural schools. To do so would be to recognise the additional financial burden of States which maintain a relatively greater proportion of educational 'effort' in rural areas. However, it would introduce a new principle into Commonwealth general recurrent allocations, and would raise the question of whether or not loadings should be given for other high-cost factors. It might also be argued that the additional recurrent costs incurred by States in respect of rural education are partly by the allocations made under the Disadvantaged Country Areas Program. However, the amount provided here is so small and the operation and nature of the program are such as to negate this argument.

GENERAL RECURRENT GRANTS FOR NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Under this program, the Commonwealth provides per capita grants to non-government schools on the basis of the estimated 'need' of the school (divided into six levels), and with a differentiation between primary and secondary schools. These per capita subsidies are a fixed percentage of the average cost of educating a student in a government school. Payments under this scheme for 1980 are as follows:

[8] *Australian Students and Their Schools, op. cit.*, gives details of the overall pattern and value of finance for Australian schools.

[9] The precise amounts are indicated in Carrick, *op. cit.*

Commonwealth General Recurrent Grants for Non-Government Schools, 1980(a)

Subsidy Level	Primary Schools		Secondary Schools	
	$	Per cent of Govt Costs	$	Per cent of Govt Costs
1	161	16	241	15
2	201	20	305	19
3	201	20	321	20
4	242	24	370	23
5	282	28	434	27
6	342	34	514	32

(a) In estimated March 1979 prices.

There are many general policy questions which are raised by the scheme, and which are currently being discussed in the context of the Schools Commission's Discussion Paper *Some Aspects of School Finance in Australia*.

However, from the viewpoint of rural education, two are particularly important. Firstly, should country schools, which may have significant recurrent costs from those in urban areas, be entitled to some special loading on their per capita grants from the Commonwealth? Is it reasonable for the Commonwealth to provide the same per capita grant to the non-government school in Derby as that in Claremont? Secondly, ought non-government boarding schools be given special consideration in the provision of recurrent support from the Commonwealth? In the latter case, the Schools Commission has pointed out that present methods of calculating entitlements for boarding schools make no concessions for their additional costs:

> *Boarding Schools.* SRRI [Schools Resources Rating Index] takes no explicit account of the costs involved in boarding schools. It is sometimes represented to the Commission that these costs should be included and that there should be special grants for boarding schools in Australia only for those not otherwise able to attend school as day students. Where parents choose to by-pass local government or non-government schools and to send their children to a boarding school the view has been taken that this should be largely at their own expense. Where children are otherwise unable to attend local schools, there are individual remote area allowances from both Commonwealth and State sources. Undoubtedly, however, there are some minimum establishment costs for boarding schools which are necessary, whether the boarding operation of the school is viable or not. The Commission has provided some assistance for refurbishing and extension of boarding school facilities, but has not provided recurrent assistance. If criteria could be established for assistance for boarding school recurrent expenses, it might be possible to devise variations to the subsidy scheme, or an additional scheme to provide financial assistance towards what is undoubtedly a uniquely Australian need.[10]

[10] Schools Commission, *Some Aspects of School Finance in Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, Oct. 1978, p. 37

CAPITAL GRANTS FOR GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

At present, capital grants are divided between the States on the basis of entitlements under four notional elements: general capital, library buildings and resources, special education, and disadvantaged schools. As the following tables indicate, the effect of allocating funds on the basis of these elements is to skew the program away from a distribution which would follow a simple per capita division of the funds.

Government School Enrolments, 1978

State	Primary		Secondary		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
New South Wales	512,986	34.8	299,778	36.6	812,764	35.4
Victoria	386,922	26.2	236,687	28.9	623,609	27.2
Queensland	238,520	16.2	107,756	13.2	346,276	15.5
South Australia	150,020	10.2	80,522	9.8	230,542	10.0
Western Australia	142,184	9.6	65,465	8.0	207,649	9.1
Tasmania	44,859	3.0	28,843	3.5	73,702	3.2
All States	1,475,491	100.0	819,051	100.0	2,294,542	100.0

Recommended Financial Allocations for Capital Programs for Government Schools, 1980(a)

State	National Elements				Total	
	Disadvantaged Schools	Special Education	Library Buildings and Resources	General Capital	Amount	%
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	
New South Wales	2,368	2,800	3,030	25,195	33,393	35.8
Victoria	2,406	1,654	2,384	19,332	25,776	27.6
Queensland	578	872	1,287	10,735	13,472	14.5
South Australia	616	799	889	7,147	9,451	10.1
Western Australia	302	782	753	6,437	8,274	8.9
Tasmania	64	255	285	2,285	2,889	3.1
All States	6,334	7,162	8,628	71,131	93,255	100.0

(a) Estimated March 1979 prices.

As the Schools Commission pointed out in its recent report,[11] a number of States have raised the question of redressing this 'imbalance' by providing a loading for the high costs associated with building schools in country areas. It is assumed that such

[11] Schools Commission, *Rolling Triennium 1978-80: Report for 1980*, Canberra: Schools Commission, July 1979, p. 12.

loading would favour Western Australia and Queensland. There is no doubt that these States face a much greater range of costs for labour and materials in school buildings than, say, Victoria or New South Wales. For example, the building locality allowance for Turkey Creek in Western Australia is estimated at 225 compared with 100 for Perth, while in New South Wales the extremes are Wilcannia, estimated at 140, compared with 100 for Sydney. However, the issue is not a simple one to resolve on the basis of building costs indices (assuming they are accurate) for different localities. The question of population distribution must also be considered: Western Australia may offset its higher rural school capital costs by being a more urbanised State than New South Wales.

Disadvantaged Country Areas Program

The Schools Commission's most comprehensive review of the funding requirements for country education was put forward in its *Report for the Triennium 1976-78*. The recommendations in that report were not accepted by the government of the day, but they became the basis for the Disadvantaged Country Areas Program which was subsequently introduced in 1977 with an initial allocation of approximately $4.1 million. Over $13 million has been spent in disadvantaged country areas over the first three years of the program's operation and in 1980 available funds have been allocated among the States as follows:

Recommended Financial Allocations for Disadvantaged Country Areas, 1980

State	Allocation	Per cent of Total
	$'000	
New South Wales	1,427	29.17
Victoria	810	16.56
Queensland	1,175	24.01
South Australia	385	7.87
Western Australia	817	16.71
Tasmania	278	5.68
All States	4,892	100.00

Under the legislative provisions for the program, funds are paid to the States which then account to the Commonwealth government through the Schools Commission for the correct expenditure of those funds. Details of specific projects are not notified to the Commission before funding occurs. The accountability documents supplied by State departments give only a general categorisation of expenditure: for example, salaries, non-salaries and grants to schools.

The program was envisaged by the Commission to be the beginning of extended action to widen the opportunities available to disadvantaged country students. It recognised that the limited funds available would do no more than allow pilot action in a limited number of areas. In 1977 fifteen areas were declared by the Commonwealth Minister on the advice of the States, selected on the basis of their relative

poverty, their special need for improved educational provision and outcomes, and the lack of opportunities for employment and further training for young people. There are now twenty-two declared disadvantaged country areas throughout Australia involving approximately 500 schools, enrolling some 70,000 students. The program is a joint one, including all schools in the declared areas, government and non-government, primary and secondary. The areas in 1979 are as follows:

New South Wales:

- Bourke Area
- North West Area
- North West Riverina Area
- South West Riverina Area

Victoria:

- Far East Gippsland Area
- King Valley-Ovens Valley Area
- Mallee Track Area
- North-Central Area
- Western Wimmera Area

Queensland:

- Central Area
- South Western Area

South Australia:

- The Far West Priority Country Education Area
- The Far North Priority Country Education Area
- The Murray Mallee Priority Country Area
- Area involving the Isolated Children of the Port Augusta School of the Air
- Area involving Isolated Children of the South Australian Correspondence School

Western Australia:

- Goldfields Area
- Outer Wheatbelt Area
- Isolated Children of the Western Australian Correspondence School
- The Kimberley Region

Tasmania:

- Huon Valley
- Far North West Area

From the viewpoint of education finance, four issues may be identified in relation to this program:

Is the allocation sufficient to meet the objectives of the program? Clearly the amount is much below that originally envisaged by the Commission, with consequent restrictions on the number of schools to which the program applies, and the range of activities which can be supported. The program is operating at only half the

level recommended by the Commission in its 1979-81 triennial report. On the other hand, the relatively small amount of money (compared with, for example, the General Recurrent Grants Program) has been applied with maximum effect and visibility. The vigour of the program may be a direct outcome of its small size and the heavy demand on the funds.

Is the basis of the distribution between the States appropriate? The present formula weights the States according to the number of school-age children in centres with up to 5,000 inhabitants and the number of children receiving isolated children's allowances. This produces the distribution shown above. However, it might be argued that 5,000 is simply too large a population unit, and that the number of recipients of isolated children's allowances bears little relationship to the educational needs and problems of many country areas. It might also be argued that the formula is simply outdated.

Should present restrictions on the use of the funds be widened? For example, should funds be used much more for 'inschool' projects: Should an allocation be made for teacher housing? Should funds be used to provide incentives for staff stability in country areas?

How can the Commonwealth obtain greater political accountability from the States for expenditures under this program? Present accountability arrangements, which provide for *ex post facto* reporting on expenditure, do little to ensure that the Commonwealth receives a due share of political recognition for funding activities carried out under the program.

The Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme

The purpose of this scheme is to provide financial assistance to parents of children isolated from appropriate schooling. This assistance takes the form of boarding, correspondence and second home allowances.

The Commonwealth has become the chief direct provider in alleviating costs due to geographic disadvantage. In addition, however, the AIC Scheme includes provision for some handicapped (and gifted) children, children of itinerant families, and some students who might be disrupted by family transfers. Assistance of Isolated Children is principally intended to alleviate additional educational expenditure resulting from isolation (or other specified cases), that is, 'education' costs, but contains an overlap in its provision for 'maintenance' costs. Means tested maintenance assistance is available to school students at every level of education under AIC, whereas Commonwealth means tested allowances (under SAS) are otherwise generally available only to students in years eleven and twelve (that is, excluding universal allowances paid under the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme, ABSEG).

Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory offer assistance additional to AIC. In the case of Queensland this assistance is considerable. The Commonwealth imposes no penalty on recipients of State boarding allowances receiving AIC payments. However, no account is taken of variations in boarding costs (including the availability of hostel accommodation) among the States, as well as levels of non-government school fees, where these cannot be avoided.

New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia offer boarding assistance alternative rather than additional to AIC. New South Wales permits a much higher parental income than AIC; Victoria offers a relatively low payment, but appears to require less stringent distance qualifications; South Australia retains the allowance but in 1979 only two students have qualified for assistance. The benefits under these schemes are considerably less than those payable under AIC. If the State schemes exist to fulfil specific needs not catered for by AIC, it might be possible to extend AIC to include such unmet needs. Alternatively, these State payments could also be additional, but not alternative, to AIC, as is the case in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Means Tests and Boarding Allowances

The Commonwealth AIC does not impose a means test on the basic boarding allowance of $500. It can be argued that all payments which compensate for expenditure to equalise access should be free of means test, and that payments should be so related to costs that poverty does not impose a deterrent to access (by the necessity for high levels of parental supplementation). However, the need to ration scarce resources, as well as the issues of incentive and disincentive are sometimes raised as counter arguments to more generous AIC provision. That is, it may be inimical to local rural school development and State planning of facilities if it is too easy for students to leave their own environment; but without adequate incentives, some parents may neglect to make proper provision for their children's education, because of the high costs of boarding. Resolution of such issues is dependent not only on policy decisions relating to overall economic incentives, minimum income schemes, and so on, but also requires co-ordination between Commonwealth and State education bodies to clarify the relationship between objectives and means, and the relationship of boarding allowances to allied forms of funding (as for example, compensation for conveyance costs, or subsidies to hostels).

Specific financial issues which are raised by the operation of the AIC Scheme are:

Are the benefits adequate for the needs of isolated children in relation to the costs of the various education services available to them? What limitations do the scale of benefits impose, and what effect is this having?

Does the scheme cover the full range of children who must live away from home, and who may be defined technically as 'isolated'?

What should be the level of means test, if any, applied to the benefits?

How can the scheme be varied from time to time to have regard for rapid changes in the financial and educational circumstances of rural families?

How can a relationship be established between the provision of benefits to students and the provision of educational services to country people when two quite separate governments are involved in funding each?

PART FOUR

The Financial Situation

Financing of Rural Education: A State Viewpoint

KEN N. BIRKS

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Financing of Rural Education: A State Viewpoint

In my consideration of the provision of education in rural areas, I will confine myself exclusively to the practices that apply in Western Australia without in any way claiming that it is the best approach, or in fact superior to what is done in other States. However, because all States are subject to the same types of problems occasioned by distance and lack of resources both financial and non-financial, the approach in Western Australia should be taken as merely indicative of the Australian scene.

To the extent that rural education is more costly or difficult to provide the problems of the service are increased. Prospects for the next few years are not encouraging and as we go forward into the eighties it is with the expectation that the financing of State governments and education in particular will become more difficult. Factors that will contribute to this tightening of resources include:

1. The increasing severity of Commonwealth budgetary cuts as their restraint of public outlays becomes more effective.
2. The meagre increases in the current budget are foreshadowed to continue in future years.
3. Declining school populations are already evident in some States.
4. Limited population growth trends.
5. Declining population in rural areas as the drift to the cities continues.
6. Increasing financial pressures between Commonwealth and State governments as the sharing of personal income tax proceeds to the next stage. At present States have a growth guarantee below which their share of Commonwealth personal income tax collections cannot fall. The guarantee is due to be phased out in 1980/81, and unless a realistic alternative can be obtained the effect will be to reduce State budget flexibility particularly if the importance of personal income tax diminishes.
7. Possible adjustment of Commonwealth income tax sharing arrangements as a result of the Commonwealth Grants Commission's review of relativities between States.

It is apparent that schools in Australia are coming under increasing pressure as resources tighten, as remedies for weaknesses are introduced and as measures to mitigate youth unemployment are instituted. Limited growth of funds and available staff, steeply rising costs due to inflation and the need to adjust policies because of energy usage will all add to the pressures. While these pressures threaten to be severe

for education as a whole it is likely that the effect on rural education if anything, will be even more severe.

The Education Function as Part of the State Budget

The State budget presented to parliament each year by the Treasurer of the time, provides funds to meet the running costs of all departments. The Treasury plays a major role in marshalling information to enable Cabinet to decide upon allocations to be made and means of raising funds to meet those allocations.

In framing the budget, careful attention is given to ensure that as far as possible all expenses of the government likely to arise during the year are provided for and that all revenue of the government is taken into account. In this State, capital expenditure is treated in separate General Loan Fund estimates and I wish to confine my remarks to the recurrent expenditure in the Consolidated Revenue Fund, as it is known.

This fund receives revenue of the State from all sources including taxes and charges, territorial revenue, collections of public utilities and specific purpose grants from the Commonwealth government. By the terms of the Constitution Act, revenue may not be diverted to another fund without being specifically authorised by legislation, as has been done for electricity charges imposed by the State Energy Commission or charges of other statutory authorities.

It is desirable to make special mention of the Commonwealth Specific Purpose Payments that are provided to the State for the recurrent costs of a great number of shared programs. In recent years the practice has been followed of including Commonwealth grants as revenue of the State and providing for the appropriation of funds for expenditure in the same way as funds for a State program.

Expenditure proposals provided in the budget are based on requests for funds submitted by all departments. The careful scrutiny given to these departmental requests by the Treasury is aimed at ensuring that funds are limited to the program authorised by the government and that imprecision is reduced to a minimum.

In approaching the task of budget formulation for the current year (1979-80), the Treasury found that the initial gap between expenditure proposals and available revenue was of the order of eighty million dollars. A most careful examination of all revenue sources and drastic pruning of expenditure was directed by the government and action on these lines carried out by each department. By this means, revenue and expenditure were brought to balance as the submission to parliament finally provided.

In the course of this pruning, the Education Department was required to play its part and reduce its expenditure proposals by a very substantial sum: additional teaching staff was limited to the number necessary to cope with increased enrolments. That is, no reduction in student/teacher ratio; additional non-teaching staff were severely limited; and some Schools Commission grants previously applied for as grants for specific projects were directed to meet normal running expenses. However, the Education Department in 1979 has gained in total share of Consolidated Revenue Fund of the State and it also appears to have suffered a lesser decline in rate of growth than other departmental groups.

Budgeting in the Education Department

In the light of this philosophy, I wish to refer to the budget formulation within the department and examine how the procedure is applied to meeting the various needs of the sectors of the department. In the course of this examination, particular attention will be directed to the question of rural education and how it is financed within the total department.

In this current financial year (1978/79) the budget provision is $370 million and of this amount almost 80 per cent is for payment of salaries and wages. The payroll consists of the following broad components:

Head Office staff	577
Teaching staff in schools including aides	15,558
Clerical and ancillary staff in schools	2,483
Cleaning and wages staff	3,905
	22,523

Within this total payroll, some persons are employed on a temporary basis but the greater majority of employees are permanent servants. The proportion of temporary employees is highest among the cleaning and wages staff and clerical people in schools but the Head Office employees and teaching staff in schools are very heavily weighted with permanent positions. This situation is desirable from an employee's point of view but is a limitation on the flexibility of the department to vary its service in the light of needs and available resources.

The balance of the funds allocated to the department this year amount to $78.8 million of which $13.1 million approximately is for assistance to private schools paid in accordance with the policy of the government. Consequently when this aid is excluded the remaining sum of $67.7 million is all that is available for contingency expenditure of the whole service much of which is uncontrollable.

The operation and control of the contingency sector of the department budget is managed on a cost-centre basis. All contingency funds are allocated to cost-centres based on the activities of the department and officers are named as responsible for their particular allocations. During the year as expenditure takes place periodic reports are circulated to the responsible officers to enable progress of the budget to be monitored.

This pattern of control is satisfactory as far as contingency expenditure is concerned but other special measures are necessary to monitor the salaries and wages bill of the department.

It is apparent from these comments that the flexibility of the department is limited and naturally questions arise of what action can be taken to meet emerging needs if resources and requirements of the situation change.

Questions that arise in this context are whether permanent appointments are desirable within the departmental structure. It is apparent that the high proportion of the department's resources committed to salaries inhibits any consideration of whether

the principal of a school would prefer some equipment in preference to a staff measure. There is little option to economise on staff and spend the funds on equipment or supplies.

As the allocation of non-teaching staff is strictly controlled and limited to unavoidable duties, the scope for transfer is virtually non-existent. Even if such a practice of using funds allocated for one purpose for meeting an alternative cost were desirable the Audit Act prohibits it.

Principles of Budget Determination within the Education Department Staffing

The government education organisation in Western Australia is a highly centralised system. It has been controlled from Perth since the early days of settlement. Although some progress has been made with a regional structure, the true allocation of resources is still centralised. For example, allocation of teaching staff is made in accordance with a staffing policy determined each year by the Head Office administration and with limited input from the regions. Regional superintendents certainly have influence in the selection of teachers to undertake various roles but the allocation of staff and determination of the number of people to be employed is centralised.

From this centralised control system comes a reasonable parity of education between schools in quite disparate communities. In principle, parents can expect similar standards of education for their children regardless of their location, although in practice minor differences inevitably arise.

The department aims to provide equal opportunity for country students to achieve their particular goal in life without serious impediment due to their place of residence.

The staffing policy determined by the department aims to supply teaching staff to schools on a uniform basis throughout the State. The details of the policy are embodied in an annual Staffing Policy Paper that receives wide distribution. This policy sets out the number of teachers and suggested class structure for the full range of school sizes.

The Staffing Policy Paper also indicates the availability of specialist teachers in subject areas and the support available in Aboriginal education, child migrant language, regional advisory services, special education and remedial centres. It also sets out a scale of availability for administrative support and regulation teachers who are appointed to improve the learning program available to children.

Without setting out to favour rural schools there are three aspects that result in improved availability of teachers to rural areas:

1. The staffing formula favours small schools and the great majority of small schools are located in rural districts.
2. Additional staff are available to superintendents for allocation to schools of special need.
3. Small rural schools benefit from the improved allocations in administrative relief, earlier assistant teacher support and specialist teacher programs.

The net benefit in rural schools is apparent from a study of the pupil-teacher ratio in rural districts. The following table sets out the pupil-teacher ratio in metropolitan and rural districts throughout Western Australia. The table indicates a pupil-teacher ratio of 19.0 to 1 in the metropolitan area and 17.9 to 1 in the rural districts. When we recall the great number of country towns where the schools are virtually no different from metropolitan schools it is apparent that the small schools have an even greater difference than indicated by this 'broad band' pupil-teacher ratio.

Pupils and Teachers in Western Australian Primary and Secondary Schools at 1 March 1979

Regions	Primary and Secondary		
	Pupils	Teachers	Pupil/Teacher Ratio
Metro South-East	40,021	2,080	19.2:1
Metro South-West	30,016	1,587	18.9:1
Metro North-East	37,923	2,024	18.7:1
Metro North-West	33,632	1,772	19.0:1
TOTAL: METRO	141,592	7,463	19.0:1
Upper Great Southern	6,884	402	17.1:1
Great Southern	7,205	379	19.0:1
South-West	16,616	909	18.3:1
Midlands	5,595	321	17.4:1
Geraldton	7,494	425	17.6:1
Goldfields	7,965	431	18.5:1
Pilbara	8,918	471	18.9:1
Kimberley	2,695	152	17.7:1
Yilgarn	4,379	271	16.1:1
Other	429	53	8.1:1
TOTAL: COUNTRY	68,171	3,814	17.9:1
GRAND TOTAL	209,763	11,277	18.6:1

Contingency Expenses

As well as staffing there are other differences that affect costs between rural and metropolitan districts. There is no shortage of examples of extra cost in the contingency field. Some can be segregated such as the zone-allowances paid to teachers who are required to live in specified areas where rates range from $232 per annum at specified towns in the south-west to $2,644 per annum at Balgo Hills in the Kimberley Division. In addition these isolated places call for higher fares for the teacher to

take up appointments, higher fares for superintendents and advisory teachers to visit, higher costs of freight for supplies, higher costs for housing of the teachers, public utility charges for electricity and water and maintenance expenses of the school itself.

Teacher housing costs should be specially mentioned. The department does not own its own houses but has 1,277 dwellings in country districts on permanent allocation from the Government Employees Housing Authority

In some cases these dwellings are two-bedroom flats, or two-bedroom duplex houses or three-bedroom houses, and they are allocated to teachers transferred to country towns. It should be noted that the available dwellings are occupied by only approximately half of the teaching staff engaged in rural districts and that non-teaching staff are not considered.

Each teacher is required to pay rental for the house allocated to them at a weekly rental ranging from eighteen dollars in the case of a single person sharing a two-bedroom duplex to thirty-seven dollars fifty cents for a teacher allocated a full house.

These rentals do not cover costs and the Government Employees Housing Authority is subsidised by the government to the extent that rentals do not cover costs of the authority. This subsidy is estimated at $4.2 million in 1979/80.

The subsidy payable by the government in respect of the houses allocated to teaching staff is without doubt a cost of education. The cost of an average three-bedroom house in the south-west of the State is say $45,000 and this property has an economic rent of ninety-two dollars per week. However as the teacher is only charged a weekly rental of thirty-five dollars per week the State is subsidising that property to the extent of fifty-seven dollars per week. In the north of the State, costs are even higher and the subsidy borne by the State. is of the order of eighty-five dollars per week.

Staff Expenses

TRANSPORT OF TEACHERS

Teachers are appointed to schools and expected to remain at that school for at least two years. The cost of transporting the teacher, his family, his furniture and his other personal effects (including one vehicle) is met by the department subject to the proviso that transport to the north west of the State is by road and elsewhere in the State by rail. Packing and insurance are met by the department and also accommodation expenses for the family during transit. Where a teacher travels to his appointment in his own vehicle he is reimbursed costs at a prescribed rate per kilometre.

The department meets the premium for insurance cover on furniture during transit and the storage costs of teachers' furniture when the teacher does not elect to take it to a country appointment. In addition teachers on transfer are entitled to claim $150 each transfer for accelerated wear and tear on furniture and effects where the current value exceeds $900.

Teachers employed in outlying areas located north of 30° south latitude are entitled to free return travel to the coast each year for themselves and for dependent

families and some teachers employed in a less isolated area are entitled to travel once in every two years.

The general costs of these concessions are of the following order of magnitude:

	$
Insurance of furniture and effects	24,000
Transport of teachers families—fares	78,000
accommodation	34,000
kilometreage	52,000
vehicles	61,000
forage allowance	14,000
furniture	640,000
depreciation of furniture	84,000
Transport, annual leave and free pass to coast	217,000
	1,204,000

DISTRICT ALLOWANCES

District allowances are payable where teachers are employed in six defined districts of the State. The allowances range from nil in the metropolitan area and the majority of the south-west of the State to $2,309 per annum in the most isolated areas. Enumerated towns receive special rates which in some cases are as high as $2,644 per annum.

Rates quoted are for married teachers and single teachers receive half rates. The annual cost of all district allowances paid is $1,060,000 for the 1,305 eligible teachers.

The allowances are adjusted each year in accordance with increases in the Consumer Price Index.

WORKERS COMPENSATION

Premiums for workers' compensation insurance are paid each year in accordance with rates based on accident experience. There is no differentiation in rates paid for country service compared with metropolitan area but the country cost is estimated as of the order of $150,000.

IN-SERVICE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

In-service teacher training is necessarily more costly for rural based teachers because of the travelling expenses and accommodation expenses while teachers are attending courses. The larger percentage of finance comes from Commonwealth sources and the total outlay this year for country teachers is approximately $370,000.

School Transport

School transport and consolidation of schools is a significant question in this total study of rural education. During recent years educational facilities for children liv-

ing in rural areas have been greatly improved and school bus services have been an important factor in this development.

In 1978/79 the Education Department is to pay approximately $13 million for school transport and of this sum about $11.6 million is for school-bus contracts of which over 90 per cent is required for rural services. The annual cost per student for bus transport in rural regions is $154.50 compared with seven dollars seventy cents per head for students in the metropolitan area.

In country districts, buses are provided when a minimum number of eleven children living more than 4.5 kilometres from the school require transport. In cases where more than five children require transport, but insufficient to justify a bus, the department can arrange a minor contract service. In the current year there are 738 contract buses and twenty-four minor contracts.

In the absence of transport services, parents, who drive their children to and from school by private means and who reside more than 4.5 kilometres from the nearest school or bus route, are paid a conveyance allowance.

The Education Department also subsidises students' bus fares in many rural areas; buses chartered by schools for educational activities; and buses for the special transport of students.

School Expenses

SCHOOL STOCKS

General issues to schools including teaching and equipment issues, cleaning and gardening materials are made on a no-charge basis in accordance with prescribed scales based on pupil and teacher populations and areas of buildings, lawns and gardens where appropriate. The annual issue to each school is based on the value of goods excluding freight and the cost of freight is met separately by the department to ensure that freight does not affect the quantity of goods supplied. Goods are centrally purchased by the Education Supplies Branch forwarded by road, rail, ship and in some cases by air where that is the only mode of transport. Cost of freight and packing materials used, excluding wages, storage and administration, exceeds $400,000 per year. A comparison of supplying three tonnes of supplies for an average school of 350 to 450 pupils to various points indicates:

	Metropolitan Area	Donnybrook	Exmouth	Kununurra
Distance from Perth	—	206 km	1,274 km	3,206 km
Cost of Goods	$4,800	$4,800	$4,800	$4,800
Freight	75	175	300	490
	$4,875	$4,975	$5,100	$5,290
Index	100	102	105	109

SCHOOL RUNNING EXPENSES

School running expenses cover a multiplicity of services and because of distance from centres and lack of skilled contractors the costs in country areas are abnormally high. The estimated cost of selected items for rural areas is as follows:

	$
Materials, contracts, equipment	200,000
Heating fuel	75,000
Kleenheat gas—industrial	45,000
Electricity power, gas and water	1,650,000
Telephone—rental and calls	600,000
Air-conditioning and fans	550,000
Repairs to furniture and equipment	1,000,000
Repairs to motor vehicles	155,000
	$4,275,000

Special Services to Cater for Rural Students

In addition to the expenses of the department and its schools there are a number of special services provided especially for country students. These services are aimed to meet the departmental goal that students should not be disadvantaged by virtue of their location. The services concerned are high cost services and amount to a per capita cost per student of several times the level that applies to a student in the metropolitan area.

ISOLATED STUDENTS MATRICULATION SCHEME (ISMS)

ISMS has evolved from a pilot project that commenced in 1974 to increase the range of educational opportunities available to rural residents. The scheme develops and evaluates curriculum materials including student guides to enable students to master matriculation level studies without immediate access to continuing specialised teacher support.

ISMS operates as a special school attached to the Head Office of the Education Department. It is managed by a senior education officer who has a staff of three education officers, seventeen tutors and four ancillary staff. The cost of the scheme in 1979 is estimated at $502,000 of which $361,000 is for salaries and $141,000 for the contingency expenses.

The education officers undertake course development work under the control of the Curriculum Branch of the Education Department. Tutors are qualified teachers appointed to support students. Each tutor specialises in one subject area and supervises all students taking that subject at either the year eleven or year twelve level. Some tutors accept the additional role of regional tutor, taking responsibility for the overall progress of students within one of eight geographical regions of the State.

Students enrolled consist of two categories: firstly students who live near a district high school and have access to resources such as the school library and, secondly, the truly isolated students who live on farms and in small communities. About three-

quarters of the 150 students enrolled have access to a district high school. The student enrolment contains a substantial proportion of mature-age students (twenty-three out of 150) and they, like their younger counterparts have opted to study five matriculation subjects over a period of two years.

An orientation camp is held during the first ten days of the school year for year eleven students and new year twelve students. All students are brought to Perth, at no expense to themselves, and accommodated in residential facilities provided by the Education Department.

In view of the enrolment of 150 students and the cost of $520,000 the average cost of an ISMS student is $3,347 per head compared with approximately $1,027 being the average cost of all students in the metropolitan area (Head Office costs have been excluded in both cases).

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL

The Western Australian Correspondence School provides an alternative form of education for children living in isolated areas, for example, on remote sheep or cattle stations or whose parents have occupations of an itinerant nature.

Subjects taught include English, mathematics, science and social studies, the four core subjects to years eight, nine and ten and also health education and art/craft. Commerce is taught to years nine and ten and hopefully technical drawing will be added in the near future. These subjects cover basically the same subject matter as in coventional schools but modifications are made to allow for isolation from other students, lack of ready access to reading materials, supervision and laboratory facilities.

Since 1977 annual seminars have been held in Perth for students and their parents. These seminars are held to enable an exchange of ideas concerning correspondence education. Teachers are able to explain proposed and current developments, what they would like parents to do and to offer suggestions concerning the progress of individual students.

Correspondence students enrolled at School of the Air study the same correspondence courses and have a useful additional audio benefit in the form of two-way radio transceiver contact with the School of the Air through the Royal Flying Doctor Service network for a short period each day.

The staff of the Western Australian Correspondence School consists of fifty teachers including the principal and six clerical and typing staff. The salary cost amounts to $818,000 and in addition the contingency cost is of the order of $87,000. The student enrolment of the school is very variable and consists of possibly 250 students in years one to seven, 200 students in years eight to ten and possibly 1,000 post school-age students with a part-time study pattern. Because of this variable pattern, it is not possible to express these costs on a per capita basis.

CHIDLEY EDUCATION CENTRE

The Chidley Centre located in the Perth suburb of Mosman Park offers a residential service to children from remote country areas who experience learning difficulties.

The education of children living in isolated locations poses special problems. Of particular importance is the provision of remedial and psychological services to such children. Even in large schools, with specialist remedial education staff, and with access to guidance officers and school psychologists, the diagnosis and remediation of learning difficulties is a difficult task that taxes both resources and the classroom teachers. For children in small remote schools, and for children living at home and working on correspondence lessons, problems of diagnosis and remediation are more acute.

The centre provides residential, remedial and general educational facilities for a maximum of forty students. In the residential section, there are two cottages, each having a house-mother and two live-in staff. Each cottage caters for twenty students, five to a divided room.

The involvement of parents is seen as an important function of the centre. Parents are encouraged to visit the centre at some point during the child's stay and four units are provided for parents who wish to accompany their children or participate in the program. The cost to a parent for full board is five dollars per day plus two dollars fifty cents for each accompanying child.

Chidley Education Centre's professional staff consists of a principal, a psychologist and seven teachers. Four trainee teachers spend twenty-four hours per fortnight on supervisory duties. There are also six part-time staff who carry out supervision mainly at weekends and two full-time house-mothers who work from 7.00 a.m. when the children rise until 9.30 a.m. when lessons begin and from 3.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.

During the years 1976-1980 approximately eighty-three children per year were enrolled at the centre.

The direct cost of running Chidley Centre amounts to $220,500 for salaries and $88,000 for contingencies which represents $7,700 per available student place (based on capacity of forty students), or seven and a half times the rate for a metropolitan student.

COUNTRY HIGH SCHOOL HOSTELS

The Country High School Hostels Authority was formed in 1960 when community service organisations were unable to continue to provide, without substantial State financial assistance, boarding accommodation in rural areas for children who wish to attend a government school.

At present there are thirteen high school hostels established at nine regional centres namely Albany, Esperance, Geraldton, Katanning, Merredin, Moora, Narrogin, Northam and Port Hedland. In addition two other hostels exist but are not operating due to lack of patronage. Within these hostels there are places for 1,421 students. The present (1979) occupancy is 993.

The buildings have been erected by the authority and are supplied rent-free to local committees who are responsible for management and the operation of the hostels. In this regard, apart from the government subsidy of three dollars to six dollars per student per week (depending on locality) which is paid directly to the

hostel, the main source of income is boarding fees which range from $1,260 to $1,500 per annum per boarder. In addition the State government pays a boarding allowance to parents of $150 per annum to supplement the Commonwealth living-away-from-home-allowance.

Hostels are expected to meet their own operating costs but in recent years, the Treasury has had to meet deficits for hostels where the number of boarders was consistently below the break even point. Costs associated with hostels in the last financial year were:

	1978/79 Actual $
Subsidies to hostels for running expenses	179,000
Boarding allowances paid to parents	108,300
Authority salaries and office expenses	16,000
Grants to Hostels Authority:	
To meet servicing of loans expenses on construction of hostels	523,000
To help meet operating deficits	35,300
To meet cost of hostel equipment	69,000
	$930,600

These figures indicate a State cost for each child resident in a country high school hostel of the order of $937 for the year.

Research carried out a few years ago suggested that students staying at hostels performed better in public examinations than did their peers of equal ability who did not attend hostels. The suggestion follows that the hostel is at least as efficient as—and possibly more efficient than—the home as a study environment. It provides regular evening periods of teacher-supervised study, limits the distractions away from study and provides opportunities for the immediate discussion of study problems with a house master or mistress.

From another point of view, it is obvious that the rapid growth of secondary and tertiary employment opportunities in urban areas indicates a need for country students to gain sufficiently high qualifications to enable them to compete successfully for job opportunities in the larger centres or the metropolitan area, and this can only be achieved by completing a full secondary education, which requires the student from outlying areas to board in the major centres. The occupational mobility of the rural student is improved by his participation in an environment in which he becomes aware of the employment opportunities outside farm ownership.

The hostels play an essential role in support of the schools by enabling high academic performance to be achieved and permitting longer schooling. Whether the student chooses farming or an alternative career, both he, and the community in general, benefit from the hostel system.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

The department operates four residential agricultural high schools: at Cunderdin, Denmark, Harvey and Narrogin.[1] These schools represent the largest resource for agricultural teaching within the department. They are operated as geographically separate wings of country secondary schools located in the towns.

The facilities at these wings include residential accommodation for all students for some of the teaching staff and farm staff; a relatively extensive and well developed school farm; and teaching and library facilities. The staff employed at the wings consist of agricultural and general teachers, manual arts instructors, a farm supervisor and assistant and farm staff.

The majority of students are admitted to the schools in their sixteenth year, after having completed third year in a secondary school.

The schools have adopted a basic course in association with their staff members and material is either added or deleted according to local conditions and the academic levels of individual students. The course is designed to be terminal and to prepare students for direct entry to the farming industry. In each school, the approximate allocation of student time is 50 per cent on agricultural theory and general classroom instruction, 25 per cent on relevant manual arts and 25 per cent on practical farm work.

Costs of Operating the Four Residential Colleges, 1978/79

Costs	Cunderdin	Denmark	Harvey	Narrogin	Total for Dept
	$	$	$	$	$
Household	107,900	101,000	104,900	168,500	482,300
Teaching	140,800	86,100	87,200	163,800	477,900
Farm Operations (less return from sales)	− 3,000	− 18,700	− 40,500	− 43,100	− 105,300
Capital	28,700	14,800	16,200	21,900	81,600
TOTAL	274,400	183,200	167,800	311,100	936,500
Fees Paid	115,200	50,600	60,000	132,000	357,800
NET COSTS	159,200	132,600	107,800	179,100	578,700
Pupil Number	96	42	50	110	298
Net Average Cost per Pupil	1,658	3,157	2,156	1,628	1,942

[1] The department has a number of country high schools where a lesser degree of agricultural training is available.

The average cost to the government of $1,942 per pupil per year at an agricultural high school can be compared with that of educating pupils in all government schools in the metropolitan area where the figure for 1978/79 was $1,027.

Salary Costs

I have highlighted a number of aspects of rural education where costs are markedly higher than a comparable service in the metropolitan area but the extreme example of high cost for rural schools is in relation to salaries. In some cases, such as salary rates in the south west of the State, the rates are little different from the rates payable in the metropolitan area. However this position takes an upward lift where housing must be provided and another lift as distance from the centre increases and the costs of freight and district allowance paid to staff members become heavy.

To illustrate this situation, we can compare the cost of employing one teacher in the Perth metropolitan area and the cost at various selected points within the State. The comparison shows that a three-year trained, married teacher, first year out of college, at a metropolitan school would attract a salary of $10,874 and would be responsible for his own housing. If that same teacher were appointed to a country town, the government would be liable to pay costs of taking up appointment, housing, district allowance and at an isolated place, the cost of return to the coast on holidays. These various costs amount to a sizeable addition to the cost of employing a teacher, as the following figures illustrate:

Teacher Appointed in	Distance from Perth km	Annual Cost $	Index
Metropolitan area	—	10,874	100
Pinjarra	84	14,346	132
Esperance	728	15,224	140
Meekatharra	757	16,996	156
Port Hedland	1,648	18,541	171
Kununurra	3,206	19,815	182

However salary costs are an extreme example and I would not wish to give the impression that all costs are so heavily weighted against rural areas. Fortunately some costs are little different to the metropolitan area and some areas have many of the characteristics of metropolitan development.

Total Development of Education Expenditure

In an effort to present a composite picture of the necessary loading for rural education, the following tabulated analysis has been made of the total expenditure of the department for the last completed financial year.

	Expenditure 1 March 1979 $	Student Numbers 4	Per Capita
Head Office, and aid to Private Schools	45,742,585		
Technical Education	39,304,591		
Urban Schools	145,353,387	141,592	1,026.56
Rural Schools	95,117,851	68,171	1,395.28
	325,518,414	209,763	n.a.

This broad analysis indicates that the cost of education in rural schools is 36 per cent higher than in the metropolitan area. A loading of 36 per cent is a heavy impost to bear when it applies to one third of the total number of students enrolled in departmental schools and naturally it raises some policy questions about viability and the justification for supplying education at this cost.

Conclusion

Many questions need answers, some of these are:

Can we afford to continue the service as it is at present?

Should the State continue to be responsible for the full cost of rural education or require parents to make a greater contribution?

Will decreasing densities of population cause our consolidated schools to decline and become unworkable?

Will rising fuel costs force restriction of our school transport system?

Will reducing rural numbers necessitate increased use of correspondence, school of the air and itinerant teachers?

Will social attitudes to unemployment require reconsideration of the policy of employing married women or should one job per family be considered?

Can the trend towards lower pupil-teacher ratios be continued?

To what extent should voluntary effort by parents as teacher aides, library assistants, and cleaners be considered?

PART FOUR

The Financial Situation

Some Economic Aspects of the Provision of Education Services in Rural Areas

IAN W. HIND

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Some Economic Aspects of the Provision of Educational Services in Rural Areas

The main distinguishing structural or demographic feature of the rural environment which alters the nature of the economics of educational service provision, compared with, for example, urban areas, is sparsity of population. The widely dispersed population in rural areas imposes obvious constraints on the ability of educational authorities to provide educational services in traditional forms. In its most extreme state, sparsity of population prevents children from physically attending school and mixing regularly with other children. The children must temporarily move away from home to attend school. Or alternatively, the package of services provided to children in these circumstances must be altered, through, for example, correspondence education. However, the number of children affected in this extreme way is not great. The more general effect of population sparsity is via the imposition of cost disabilities on the provision of traditional forms of service provision. If services have to be provided, which we assume they must for school-level education, then a widely dispersed population necessitates the operation of educational facilities at less than optimum size, that is, at a higher per unit cost than is possible in more densely settled communities. This paper examines first, the effect of sparsity of population on the unit cost of provision of educational services in rural areas at the primary school level; and second, the paper examines rural school consolidation from a cost-efficiency perspective.

The Cost-Efficiency Problem

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As societies modernize, their agricultural sectors decline in importance in the total economy. Depopulation of rural areas generally follows. The history of the way in which educational authorities have reacted to this changing relative position of agriculture in the economy can really be summed up in one word *consolidation*. The specific reasons advanced for the pursuance of this particular educational policy are many and varied. However, we can identify two general and quite distinct hypotheses. The first might be labelled the 'conventional wisdom', and has been carefully documented by Sher and Tompkins (1977). They argue that consolidation was implemented by authorities because it was believed to be a more *cost-efficient* method of providing educational services in rural areas. Through consolidation the economic benefits of economies of scale could be realized. Second, and perhaps more importantly in sustaining the policy over time, it was believed that consolidation was more *effective*, that is, it enabled provision of better quality education and more varied educational experiences for rural children. Thus the conventional wisdom has it, that in choosing to consolidate schools, educational authorities were

behaving *altruistically*—the policy was designed to secure the best interest of the customers, that is, the children, and the taxpayers who provide the finance for rural education.

An alternative explanation of the consolidation of schools has recently been advanced by Staaf and Buchanan (1977). Utilizing the emerging 'public choice' paradigm in policy analysis, these two writers argue that consolidation was designed to benefit the members of the educational bureaucracy. Based on an analysis of the motivational structure of the educational bureaucracy in the United States, they maintain that consolidation was desired by educators because salary levels and promotion prospects, and notably those for educational administrators, depended directly on school and district size. I have discussed the unrealism of the behavioural postulates of public choice approaches to the study of educational bureaucracies elsewhere (Hind, 1979). Anyway, in the case of consolidation of schools in rural areas, the organizational and financial contexts of school governance in the United States and Australia are sufficiently different to allow us with justification not to dwell at length on the Staaf/Buchanan thesis. For the purposes of this workshop, it is assumed in this paper that with respect to consolidation in Australia, policy-makers acted in good faith, that is, it was believed to be the most appropriate policy at the time in catering to educational needs in rural areas.

Sher and Tompkins review a wide range of evidence on consolidation and in so doing they are led to turn, in effect, conventional wisdom justifying consolidation on its head. They argue that in fact consolidation is *not* cost-efficient—the cost savings have been exaggerated or non-existent. In addition, they argue that the educational advantage (or effectiveness) of consolidation has been largely illusory. In this paper I want to look at some more recent empirical evidence related to the first of these 'reverse hypotheses', that is, the cost-efficiency dimension of rural school consolidation. As to the second of Sher and Tompkins' claims, that is, that school size in itself seems unrelated to school quality measures, this is a complex issue both conceptually and in terms of empirical testing. School size has not been found to have a consistent relationship with academic performance in the many econometric and psychometric studies of the 'input-output' type. However, this is really not surprising, given that *no* school variable has been shown to have a consistent positive relationship with measures of educational quality. In this paper it is assumed then school size *per se* is not related to educational quality.

In discussing the cost-efficiency dimension of rural school consolidation, two separate relationships need investigating. First, the relationship between recurrent and capital costs of services and school size; and second, the relationship between consolidation and student transportation costs. If economies of size in schooling exist, then we might expect some cost savings to result from consolidation. However, these savings need to be traded-off against the increased transport costs consequent upon consolidation. We might then ask is there some optimal pattern of provision of services in rural areas which is most cost-efficient, that is, which minimizes the sum of school and student transportation costs? It seems that there is no straight forward answer to this question. However, let us employ some *a priori* reasoning about this matter, and then square this off against what findings we have from

expirical research. While the economies of school size have not been an extensively researched topic, some fairly consistent results have been found regarding cost-efficiency and optimum size ranges for secondary schools. For primary schools the research findings point in quite different directions. However, as indicated later in this paper, some of these studies of primary school costs have employed curious statistical methodologies.

School Size and Cost: an *a priori* framework

If we know the essential characteristics of the technology of schooling directly related to the cost of provision of services, then it is possible to construct a simple simulated cost function tracing out the relationship between total educational cost incurred at the school level, and school size. According to latest Schools Commission data, about eighty seven per cent of expenditure in State government schools is recurrent expenditure.[1] Of this recurrent allocation, slightly in excess of seventy-five per cent is paid out in the form of salaries and wages. Payment to teachers and other instructional staff account for about sixty-eight per cent of the total recurrent budget. Clearly, schooling is an extremely *labor-intensive* industry. As such *a priori* potential cost savings from successful exploitation of economies of scale would appear to be rather limited. Consider the shape of simulated cost function of a primary school for the wages and salary bill paid to teachers and other instructional staff.

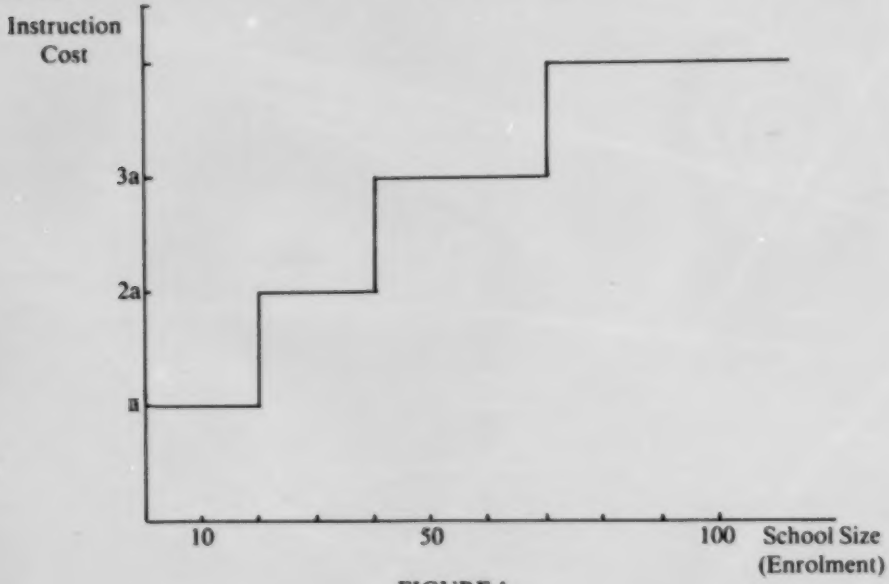

FIGURE 1

[1] Schools Commission, *Australian Students and their Schools*. Canberra: Schools Commission, 1979, p. 140.

As we would expect, this figure indicates that instruction costs do increase with increases in school size. However, the relationship is not a smoothly rising one. Rather, it looks more like a 'step' function, with clear discontinuities. On the vertical axis 'a' is the establishment cost of getting a school started. In Australia a school is usually not established unless there is a guaranteed minimum average daily attendance of about ten students. Thus the recurrent establishment cost is the salary cost of providing the initial teacher. Above this first minimum threshold (that is, about ten students) as the school grows, instruction costs remain constant (that is, the marginal cost of providing instruction is zero) until the next threshold is reached, which in Australian States tends to be at about thirty pupils.[2] New steps in the function occur each time an additional teacher is employed. Now, the exact shape and location of this total instruction cost curve depends essentially on two factors. First, the unit salary cost. This determines the size of the steps on the vertical axis. Second, administrative policy on maximum class sizes and other aspects of staffing policy such as minimum thresholds for provision of non-teaching personnel. Such policy determines the size of the horizontal 'runs' (or the various ranges of zero marginal cost) on the horizontal axis.

From the total cost curve we can construct another simulated curve: the average cost curve. This curve is constructed by dividing total cost by number of students, and then plotting average cost against school size (See Figure 2).

This curve indicates that average costs fall as school size increases, but because the curve is derived from the total cost curve, the relationship is also characterized by discontinuities, that is, average costs fall progressively, then rise sharply at the various thresholds, and then fall once again. The size of these discontinuities, and the actual enrolment level at which average costs stop falling, or in fact start to rise, depends on the administrative policy considerations mentioned above. So much for theory. What do we know from empirical research about the precise shape and location of these cost functions that is, about the actual presence of economies and diseconomies of size in primary schooling?

School Size and Cost: Research Findings

Summary details of a number of statistical studies concerning determinants of unit costs in primary schools are presented in Table 1. Each of these studies has employed least squares regression techniques on financial and enrolment data pertaining to a sample of primary schools. The dependent variable in each study is expenditure per student incurred at the school level. Thus expenditures incurred on pupil transportation and central administration are excluded. The studies attempt to explain variation in expenditure per student amongst schools by such independent variables as size of school, student/teacher ratio and average teacher salary. Each of the studies, except for that of Dawson and Dancey (1974), did find evidence of economies of size in primary schools. However, the extent of the economies implicit in the statistical coefficients varies considerably. This is surprising given that the 'technology' of primary schooling tends not to vary greatly from one school system to another.

[2] Sometimes part-time teaching assistance is provided before reaching this threshold.

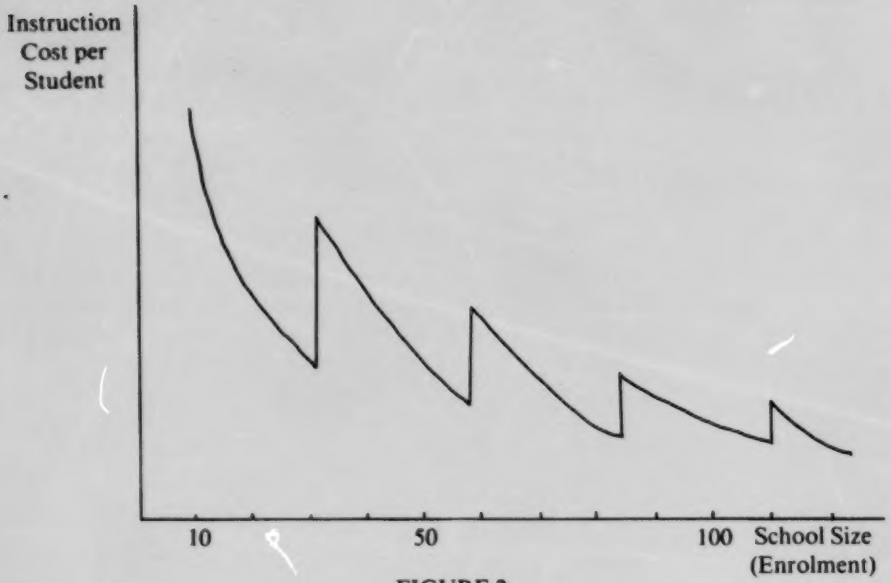

FIGURE 2

Dawson and Dancey (1974) found that most of the variation in the unit cost of primary schools in Ontario, Canada, was explained by variation in the student/teacher ratio. Surprisingly, school size was not found to be a statistically significant variable. Their results led them to conclude that '. . . at the elementary level, there appears to be little evidence of economies of scale' (p. 195). Unfortunately, the range of school sizes in their sample was not stated. However, given that in their data set there was no correlation between student/teacher ratio and school size it seems reasonable to conclude that small schools were probably not included in the sample. Because of the highly labour-intensive nature of primary schooling and relatively simple and uniform technology involved therein, we would expect the economies of size to be exhausted at fairly low enrolment levels.

Two later studies by Johnson and Mitten (1976), and Holland, Baritelle and White (1976), did each produce statistically significant results confirming the presence of economies of size in primary schools. In fact, in each of these studies the economies so found were quite substantial. Johnson and Mitten for example, argue that as enrolment increases from 100 to 587 students (the least-cost school size in their sample) average per student costs can be expected to fall by $473 per student! Beyond 587 students, costs can be expected to *rise* at the same rate. These results suggest substantial cost savings from consolidation, even if relatively large schools are involved in the consolidation.[3] I think policy makers should tread very carefully

[3] For example, if five schools each with 100 students and another with eighty-seven students were consolidated into one school with 587 students, then the recurrent cost savings (excluding transportation) based on Johnson and Mitten's cost functions would be of the order of $300,000 per annum!

Table 1. Economies of Size in Primary Schools: Some Research Findings

Author(s)	Data	Range of School Sizes in Sample	Statistical Function	Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	Evidence of Economies of Size
Dawson & Dancey (1974)	Ontario schools (1970)	Not stated	Quadratic	Exp./student	Student/teacher ratio A.D.A.*	No
Johnson & Mitten (1976)	Pennsylvania (1973/74)	136 to 866 students	Quadratic	Exp./student	A.D.A. Physical size of school (sq. footage)	Yes Substantial economies. Optimum size = 587 students
Hind (1977)	New South Wales (1971/72)	9 to 928 students	Hyperbola	Exp./student	A.D.A. Age of buildings. Ave. teacher salary. Dummy variables indicating staffing thresholds	Yes Moderate economies. Most cost savings exhausted by 100 students.
Keane (1978)	Prince Edward Island, Canada (1971/72)	Not stated	Hyperbola	Exp./student	A.D.A. Physical size of school (sq. footage)	Yes Moderate economies
Holland, Baritelle & White (1976)	Lincoln County, Eastern Washington (1972/73)	70 to 500 students	Quadratic	Exp./student	A.D.A.	Yes Substantial economies. Optimum size = 500 students

* A.D.A. = Average Daily Attendance.

when interpreting these results as the property of symmetry implicit in the use of the quadratic form in the regression equations bears little resemblance to what we might expect to occur with respect to average costs and school size based on *a priori* reasoning and casual observation. As indicated earlier, the relationship between average costs and school size is likely to be characterized by discontinuities in the falling costs range and again in the rising cost range. Between these falling costs and rising costs there is likely to be a fairly wide range in which average cost exhibits little variation as school size changes. The specification of discontinuities in the estimation of cost curves for primary schools in rural areas of New South Wales was employed by Hind (1977) and a somewhat similar technique was used recently for Canadian rural schools by Keane (1978). My work did find evidence of economies of size, but these were not very substantial. Beyond a school size of about 100 students the reduction in average cost with an increase in school size was fairly slight. With respect to teacher costs only, diseconomies set in (that is, average costs rose) at a school size of about 600 students, which at the time the data was collected (1971-72) was the threshold at which a school received a non-teaching principal. In Western Australia at the moment, this threshold occurs at about 300 students.

In summary, the empirical evidence on the relationship between average cost and size of primary schools, while not being convincing and consistent, is suggestive. Most very small schools tend not to be cost-efficient because of their large student/teacher ratios; large schools also have an excess cost burden due to higher administrative overheads. The precise parameters defining what might be called an 'optimum school size range' depend essentially on staffing policy with respect to the allocation of teachers with respect to school size, and policy pertaining to non-teaching principals and/or deputies. Given that over the last couple of decades, average student/teacher ratios in school systems have fallen considerably, the relative cost disadvantage of maintaining very small schools has probably narrowed over that period.

The Economics of Rural School Consolidation

The existence of economies of size in primary school indicates that some recurrent cost savings will probably result from consolidation, provided that the resultant consolidated schools are not too large. However, consolidation in most situations does bring with it increased student transportation costs. Which is larger? The savings from exploitation of economies of size, or the consequent increase in expenditure on transportation? This is a question about which it is unwise to make too many generalizations. Each case of consolidation really needs to be examined separately. We will briefly look at two such case studies, the first being one of the empirical studies listed previously, and the other in the policy arena of fiscal equalization.

Utilizing a simulation separable programming technique in which both school size and feeder catchment areas of schools (but not school location) were allowed to vary, Holland, Baritelle and White (1976) aimed to find for a single county, the optimal arrangement that minimized the sum of school and transport costs. Compared with the existing arrangement, the optimal arrangement thus found involved a sav-

ing of $32,000 out of an annual budget of $2,790,000. These results led them to conclude that 'while public schooling seems to be characterized by substantial internal economies, consolidation cannot be counted on to provide cost savings in sparsely populated rural areas. If community pride and viability are affected adversely by the closing of schools, the correct community decision may be to keep the school open—in view of the small cost savings' (p. 78).

The question of the size of the net savings (if any at all) of the program of rural school consolidation in Western Australia was an item of debate and conjecture between the State of Western Australia and the Commonwealth Grants Commission from the early 1960s until Western Australia ceased to be a claimant state in 1968. Transportation of school children was first listed as a separate item of expenditure by the Commonwealth Grants Commission in 1954/55. Throughout the rest of the 1960s transportation expenditure on school children in Western Australia, whether measured on a per capita basis, or as a percentage of total education expenditure, exceeded considerably the standard expenditure in the two most populous states (New South Wales and Victoria). From the late 1940s rural school consolidation had proceeded fairly rapidly in Western Australia and an extensive network of contract bus services was developed. The Grants Commission in its *Thirty-Second Report* (1965) contended that this process of consolidation in Western Australia had resulted in considerable economies and thus it was prepared to allow for purposes of calculating its special grant to Western Australia, only part of Western Australia's additional costs on school transport. At subsequent hearings, Western Australia presented evidence based on an analysis of recurrent costs of primary schools of different sizes, that consolidation probably had resulted in some savings in school-level expenditures. However, although consolidation in Western Australia had resulted in fewer pupils being enrolled in the small one- and two-teacher schools, proportionately more pupils in Western Australia were enrolled in schools with less than 200 pupils compared with the standard States. Thus the overall size distribution of primary schools in Western Australia was found, according to the Western Australian submissions, to be only marginally more cost-efficient than in the standard States. The effects of consolidation on the recurrent costs of secondary schools was more difficult to analyse quantitatively because cost varies as much with type of school as it does with school size.

Although some concessions were made, the Commonwealth Grants Commission was never fully convinced of the arguments advanced by Western Australia about rural school consolidation and its relationship to economies of size and pupil transportation costs.[4] One important aspect revealed in this dialogue is that although school operating costs can generally be analyzed according to school size and apportioned separately for primary and secondary schools, the same is not true in the case of pupil transportation as many bus services in rural areas carry both primary and secondary school children. In examining the additional transportation costs consequent upon consolidation of primary schools one needs to take into consideration both the immediate and the longer term objectives of consolidation. The contextual

[4] For developments in the Commission's thinking see the sections on Transportation of School Children in the Thirty-Second to the Thirty-Fifth Reports of the Commission.

issues relating to consolidation in Western Australia were discussed in an exchange between the Chairman of the Grants Commission and the Director of Education in Western Australia in Grants Commission hearings in Perth (February, 1968).

CHAIRMAN: . . . as a result of consolidation, you . . . get two things: One is saving as a result of consolidation—it may or may not be true—but you will also get a higher quality of education in the consolidated school. Would this be true?

MR DETTMAN (Director of Education): Yes, this has been the whole aim of consolidation in recent years—to provide a higher education for children in country areas, and in pursuing this policy it has been necessary to implement it against the background of the population of Western Australia. The object has been to provide country children—apart from those in a very isolated area—with a reasonable standard of secondary education.

The first thing, therefore is to close one-teacher primary schools, and to bring the children to a central point.

The second thing is, when you have sufficient numbers, to convert it into what we call a junior high school, where you have a primary high school with a secondary top; and we can staff it fairly generously in order to provide the children in the secondary class with a reasonable standard of education.

But that is only the intermediate stage. The ultimate object is to provide sufficient children in the secondary part of the school to form a separate high school; and we have to form separate high schools with numbers below those in the States which have a greater density of population.

Thus in Western Australia, consolidation of small primary schools was seen at the time to be a necessary part of the process of providing a full range of secondary education in country areas equal to that provided in city areas. In many situations once the bus networks were established to feed these secondary schools, the actual marginal cost of providing transport for children affected by further closures of small primary schools was virtually zero. In other very sparsely populated areas, simply to keep small one-teacher schools open, it has been necessary to provide fairly expensive bus services.

My main objective in looking back at the implications for fiscal equalization of rural school consolidation in Western Australia in the 1950s and 1960s is to stress that even at the technical/economic level, let alone at the political/educational level, an understanding of local circumstance is paramount. In a way, to talk about the economics of rural education is a trap, if in so doing we are led to believe that we can find some widely applicable formulae that indicate the optimum way of providing services in rural areas generally.

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PART FOUR

The Financial Situation

The Economic Effectiveness of Student Allowances for Isolated Families

ROBERT LENAHAN

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The Economic Effectiveness of Student Allowances for Isolated Families*

Because Australia supports a dual system of schooling the majority of parents have a basic choice between government schools and others conducted by private organisations, generally the churches. For most families the financial implication of this choice centres around the payment of tuition fees. Parents who send children to non-government schools pay fees while those who enrol children at government schools do not.

However, circumstances for families living in remote locations are somewhat different. While these isolated families may also select schools of either type, their children can attend only by living away from home. This means the payment of accommodation costs. Moreover, boarding schools, which offer both accommodation and education services jointly, are a popular choice amongst isolated families. As these are mainly non-government schools, isolated families who select this type of education arrangement pay both boarding and tuition fees.

Public finance for education in Australia enables the government schools to operate, it subsidises non-government schools, and it assists groups of children who are disadvantaged. The unit operating costs of government schools are, on average, about $1,000 per primary pupil and $1,600 per secondary student per annum. Government grants for non-government schools are available from both State and Commonwealth governments and provide significant financial support. Several compensatory arrangements have been made for disadvantaged groups, and cases of positive discrimination by both State and Commonwealth governments are not difficult to find. States, for example, have either special schools or special facilities for handicapped children, and the Commonwealth makes special grants for socio-economically disadvantaged schools, and migrants. The compensatory arrangements for isolated families are cash benefits payable either for children living away from home, or for children taking correspondence lessons.

For isolated children living away from home the government allowances help defray private costs, particularly boarding and tuition fees, and their effectiveness in this regard is obviously a matter of political concern. Ultimately it is political judgements which determine the establishment, continuation, or abolition of the various allowances, and associated matters such as the nature and level of benefits and eligibility criteria. But political though these judgements may be, they frequently arise out of a concern for economic circumstances and are often the outcome of con-

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* My thanks go to members of the Planning Branch, Department of Education in Queensland, who helped with data collection and commented on earlier drafts of this paper. Nevertheless the views expressed are mine alone and may not reflect those of either the Planning Branch or the Queensland Department of Education.

sideration given to economic factors. Accordingly, this paper focuses on the economic implications of government welfare programs for isolated children who live away from home, and it attempts to assess the effectiveness in economic terms of the allowances that are paid.

Unfortunately, however, economic science has not yet provided governments with maxims of financial conduct that permit an unambiguous evaluation of welfare. Analysts and planners cannot, therefore, measure the effectiveness of the allowance schemes in terms of universally acceptable yardsticks. In any appraisal there is always some room for judgement and interpretation. As Sharp says:

> within a second best world there is no generalised set of rules which can be laid down which relate to the optimal allocation of resources. What constitutes a good or a bad allocation of resources cannot be laid down in advance, but has to be judged in the light of circumstances.[1]

Clearly then, this review of living away from home (LAFH) allowances cannot be completely positive in its approach, and as the topic is fundamentally one of welfare, the two main issues which must obviously be considered are equity and efficiency. Each is examined in turn following a short description of allowance payments, particularly those in Queensland.

The Allowances

Comprehensive details about LAFH allowances in Australia are not provided in this paper mainly because they have been catalogued elsewhere, and in any case it is no small task to describe the variety of benefits and conditions which apply.[2] However the essential features are that the Commonwealth government, since 1973, has paid allowances for isolated children at any school year level who live away from home at boarding schools, hostels, in private board or in a second family home. Some State governments also provide allowances, quite independent of Commonwealth assistance for isolated children, and although eligibility criteria are different, many beneficiaries are supported by both governments. Other States provide allowances for families who are excluded by the Commonwealth's eligibility requirements, but meet State criteria. In these States, although parents may be eligible for both, they receive only one. Other variations are in terms of benefits, which may differ for children of different ages; and in terms of eligibility, which may be determined by a means test as well as distance from rural schools.

Queensland is one of the States which pays allowances for living away from home irrespective of Commonwealth conditions and benefits. Thus the State and Commonwealth schemes operate side by side, and beneficiaries could be in receipt of various combinations of benefits. Many students in school years eight to ten for example, receive allowances of almost $900 per annum irrespective of family wealth or income. Students of the same age whose parents are at the poor end of the socio-

[1] See Sharp, M., *The State, the Enterprise and the Individual*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973, pp. 22-3.

[2] Schools Commission, *Direct Payments and Allowances to School Students in Australia*. Canberra: Schools Commission, May 1980.

economic scale, could receive $2,000 per annum. In extreme cases at the year eleven and twelve levels, poor but bright students could receive slightly more than $3,000 per annum.

Broadly speaking, this indicates the range of benefits available, but it is not intended that comparisons be made between the different types of allowances, or the variation in benefits between States. For parents, it matters very little whether they receive a cheque from the Commonwealth or the State, so interest in this paper has been concentrated on the total allowance package and the principle of making direct cash benefits available to isolated parents.

Equity

The important economic functions of welfare services are to provide services which the market mechanism fails to provide, and to redistribute income.[3] Both may be related to the payment of living away from home allowances for isolated children.

As schooling in Australia is regarded mainly as a public good,[4] most children of school age—almost eighty per cent in fact—attend government schools. Consequently the payment of allowances for isolated children can scarcely be regarded as a case of market failure, as virtually no market exists in an economic sense. More likely, the special arrangements made by governments for isolated families have been in pursuit of the hazy objective of equality of opportunity. This is an appealing notion because it seems fair and just, but in practice turns out to be a vague concept which has, according to Coleman,[5] led to enormous confusion. Equalising opportunities for all children, irrespective of their place of residence may be a fine ideal, but it offers little guidance about the size of allowances that are needed to balance the scales of justice. Confusion over what constitutes equality has already arisen because some isolated parents believe that allowances should be equivalent to the cost per pupil in a government school. In short, they are arguing for equality of inputs and seem to completely disregard the fact that, as a considerable portion of such an allowance would be consumed in overcoming the handicap of isolation, outcomes could not possibly be equalised.

Any realistic consideration of the problem of isolation must inevitably show that allowances alone cannot possibly create equality of opportunity in terms of either educational processes or outcomes. Examination of records in Queensland shows that about 3,500 families receive allowances in respect of over 4,100 children who either live away from home or take correspondence.[6] A survey of these families late in 1977 provided the profile of education arrangements shown in Figure 1. On the one hand, young children tend to be kept at home and miss the experience of daily attendance at school. On the other hand, older children are given this experience, but this is achieved through separation from families. At every stage in their educa-

[3] See Sharp, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

[4] While schooling is regarded as such, it is not a pure public good. See Blaug, M., *An Introduction to the Economics of Education*. Penguin, 1972, p. 107.

[5] See Coleman, J. S., 'What is meant by "an Equal Educational Opportunity"', in *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1975, p. 27.

[6] These numbers were receiving benefits but may understate numbers of isolated if all those eligible have not applied.

tional careers, isolated children are deprived of something enjoyed by their urban peers, and this is inequitable. Regrettably it is also probably inevitable.

On the second economic function of these welfare payments, it should be quite clear that both the State and Commonwealth governments shift income from taxpaying units to isolated families to help them educate their children. Both governments, nevertheless, approach the redistribution issues cautiously. While they are prepared to compensate virtually all isolated families to an extent, the use of means tests for some allowances requires the more affluent families to make significant direct private contributions to living away and tuition costs. Again drawing on survey data for Queensland, it was found that the shortfall between costs and allowances received—the net cost to parents—was as high as $6,500 per annum for families who had children living away from home. However, the distribution of net costs was negatively skewed, and seventy per cent of families had net costs of less than $1,500. Even so these data tend to understate the position, as the costs reported were limited to tuition, accommodation and travel. Other miscellaneous costs for sports, excursions and so on, about which parents complained bitterly, were excluded.

The complicating factor in all of this is who should meet the cost of a child's physical well-being. Irrespective of socio-economic status, urban families are expected to feed, clothe, and lodge children but may send them to 'free' government schools' for their education. Amongst many isolated families on the other hand, accommodation costs are high because this service is not dispensed by parents in their own homes. This is certainly a disadvantage, but to what extent should it be subsidised? Should the incidence of these costs fall upon all taxpayers, or only those who are isolated and 'well-off' as the means test criteria imply?

Quite apart from the issue of whether or not education should be as 'free' for rural students as it is for the populace in cities and towns, problems of fairness also relate to the capacity of families to pay the costs of having children live away from home. Firstly, although the Queensland survey data collected in 1977 were obtained in the midst of a rural recession, fifty per cent of families reported taxable incomes of less than $6,000 per annum. Only thirty per cent had incomes over $10,000. At that time average earnings were about $10,000 per annum. A net cost of even $1,000 out of the disposable component of these low incomes would be a significant amount.

Secondly, it is well known that rural incomes fluctuate and the cyclical variations can be extensive. This is illustrated by the index of rural farm income in Australia prepared by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Here the problem is in connection with families whose incomes fluctuate around means test maxima, and the time lags involved in processing these applications and paying the allowances. As a result a family whose income was above the means test limits last financial year could be below it this year, and would not benefit immediately.[8] Meanwhile the family would incur schooling costs which must be paid from present disposable income.

[7] Although parents who send children to government schools do not pay tuition fees, other private costs may have to be borne in connection with consumable items, sports, excursions, and so on.

[8] Some may not benefit at all if the student leaves at the end of the year in which incomes are low.

Thirdly, data for the assessment of means tests are inadequate. The most convenient source of authenticated documentation of income is taxation returns and generally taxable income is used as the measure. Survey results from the 1977 study showed, however, that the male parent in over seventy per cent of families was an owner-manager of a rural property or business who would have considerable scope to downward bias assessed taxable income. Moreover, means tests based on income, which do not at the same time consider wealth, tend to miss their targets. Together, these two fundamental deficiencies lead to pointed injustices at times, and instances arise where the wages of rural property workers exclude them from benefits while their employers who obviously possess considerable assets are at the same time eligible.

In essence, the two aspects of equity that have been considered in connection with allowances could scarcely be described as fair—judging by standards that might reasonably be expected from the Australian public. However, little room exists for improvements. Periodic reviews of the size of allowances are obviously necessary, but the separation of children from their families or children from schools they ought to attend, seems an inevitable inequality the isolated must bear. Means tests, on the other hand, encounter the intractible problems of defining and measuring income and wealth, where again, prospects for improvements are slight.

Efficiency

Unfortunately some of the problems that bedevil the establishment of equity criteria, also plague efficiency, and the task of assessing efficiency is not necessarily more objective. One of the basic difficulties is that because a social consensus is indeterminate,[9] economic efficiency criteria for the allocation of resources must be derived from the expression of individual preferences for goods and services. In short, they are based on the doctrine of consumer sovereignty.[10] To consider the efficiency implications of LAFH allowances the distribution of services amongst beneficiaries are discussed first, and aspects of the production of services follow.[11]

In contrast to the provision of most education services, an interesting feature of LAFH allowances is the extent to which they do, in fact, cater for family preferences. Eligible parents have almost complete freedom of choice of education and accommodation arrangements, and from the survey data collected in Queensland, they obviously make different selections. The arrangements chosen for the 4,100 children in Queensland who benefited from LAFH allowance schemes are shown in Figure 2. Most children were sent to boarding schools, but significant numbers were accommodated in other arrangements. As all boarding schools are non-government schools, and most of the children in the alternative arrangements attended State schools, the table also indicates educational preferences.

While it would almost certainly be an anathema to Australian governments to sug-

[9] See any discussion of the social choice, for example, Mansfield, E., *Microeconomics, Theory and Applications*. New York: Norton, 1975.

[10] See Sharp, *op. cit.*, p. 6

[11] The framework followed is obviously derived from the Pareto criterion, see Sharp, *op. cit.*, ch. 1.

gest that they finance any aspect of education by a voucher scheme, this is certainly what they have done to compensate the isolated. As Wiseman has indicated, a prime social aim of vouchers is to give parents freedom of choice but preserve State subsidisation of education.[12] This of course, is precisely what the allowance schemes do. Moreover, the allowances are even less restrictive in the application of funds than a voucher scheme. Vouchers can be exchanged for cash only by the suppliers of the services for which they are intended, but allowances are cash benefits. Once parents become eligible at the beginning of each school year the only continuing obligations are that the child for whom the allowance is payable remains a student away from home. Parents who successfully secure cheap accommodation could therefore, reap a surplus.

As satisfaction with allowances might also be regarded as some measure of their effectiveness, parents who responded to the Queensland survey were asked to express an opinion about the level of benefits. Since the payments are straightforward transfers to beneficiaries, a critical bias in responses was expected, but contrary to these expectations only fifty per cent of families regarded the allowances as inadequate. No attitudinal difference was evident for families with different taxable incomes, but they were responsive to net costs. Families with higher net costs were more likely to believe that the allowances were inadequate. This sentiment probably has its roots in the equity issue. Because education is treated elsewhere as a public good, isolated parents seem strongly attached to the view that any aspect of this service should be costless to them.

Parental attitudes which probably influence the choice of accommodation and education arrangements suggest a fairly acceptable pattern of distribution of these services. When asked to rank order the factors which parents considered in the selection of an away from home arrangement, only nineteen per cent placed fees and costs at the top of the list. On the other hand arrangements chosen seemed to conform with strongly expressed preferences. Three-quarters of all families regarded a good quality education as of prime importance, and this opinion was more strongly felt amongst those who selected boarding schools. Parents also liked to have children close enough to home to return at week-ends, and whereas only five per cent of boarding school students could achieve this, sixty per cent of those in other arrangements were able to do so. Moreover, a considerably higher proportion of children in private board, second homes and hostels were of primary school age, and probably more in need of parental contact and support. Data about the selection of arrangements give the impression that any income effect of allowance increases on the choice of a living away from home arrangement would be fairly small. On the other hand increased incomes could affect the retention of students who reach the school leaving age. Thus an income effect may change preferences between staying on at school or seeking employment.

The impact of the allowance schemes on the production of living away from home facilities works, of course, through the level of fee payments. Fee increases could

[12] See Wiseman, J., 'The Economics of Education', *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. vi, 1959, pp. 48-58. Reprinted in Blaug, M. (ed.), *Economics of Education: Selected Readings*, Vol. 2. Penguin, 1969, pp. 360-372.

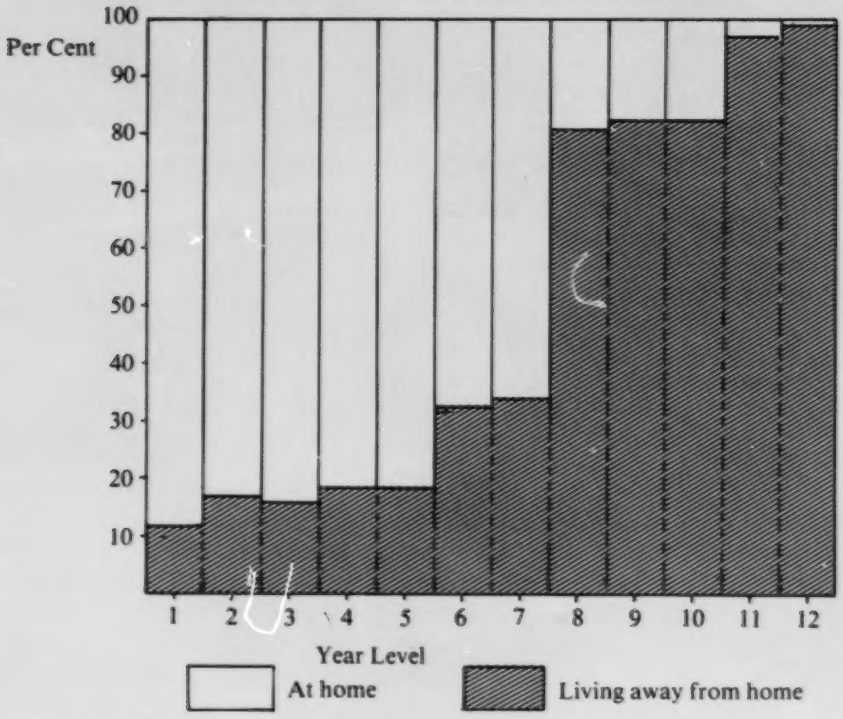

FIGURE 1. Percentage of students LAFH and AH in each year level

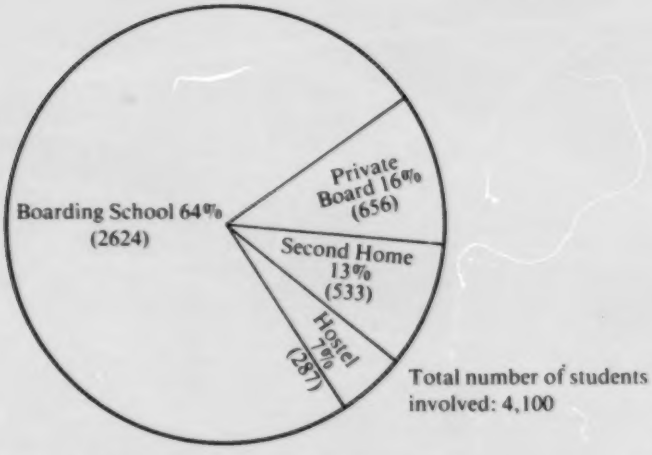

FIGURE 2. Demand for living-away-from-home arrangements

almost be guaranteed following a rise in allowance benefits. At present the market for boarders is quite competitive and of 10,000 places available in Queensland's boarding schools and hostels, 2,000 are empty. Fees are kept as low as possible, partly because of the competition for places and in addition because suppliers are not profit maximising institutions. They are essentially egalitarian. Accordingly fee increases which strike at the isolated poor would be avoided, but increased government subsidization is acceptable.

Boarding schools and hostels have come under considerable cost pressures during the last few years. Boarding schools in particular, because they provide both accommodation and education services have been afflicted by Baumol's disease.[13] Despite this, average fees have changed little in real terms. As well, declining boarding enrolments have accentuated the problem of fixed costs such as building maintenance, and a decline in the quality of facilities and services has probably been inevitable.

Granted that production in this 'industry' is X-inefficient[14] and optimal production is not achieved, gains could be made without switching to alternatives. But if optimal levels of production were achieved, what are the opportunity costs? Perhaps a brief mention might be made of some hypothetical alternatives. One might be to dispense with allowances, accept that education should be regarded as a public good, and place a school everywhere there is at least one child. The consequences of this are clear enough, pupil-teacher ratios would decline, and the unit costs of education would increase. Moreover, if social interaction has anything to do with equality of opportunity such a scheme could make isolated children worse off.

Another alternative might be described as technological. Isolated children could be deschooled and be supplied with a capital intensive form of education. This could be a progressive stream of audio-visual materials, and might even extend to two-way video communication via satellite with centrally located tutors. The comparative costs of allowances and such a technological scheme would have to be worked out, but although these are unclear, the scheme would almost certainly flounder for much the same reasons as the first alternative. Rural traditions alone virtually negate such radical schemes, and for many isolated parents a good education is synonymous with attendance at a school. For older students a boarding school education is generally preferred. In any case, alternative schemes show no greater promise of better resource allocations than the use of allowances.

Summary

To sum up, this paper has attempted to highlight some economic aspects of government cash benefits to isolated families which enable children to live away from home to receive their schooling. It has considered allowances as welfare payments and has

[13] This suggests that in labour-intensive acitivities (like education and catering) which depend on the quality of labour for productivity improvements, costs will rise. See, for example, Blaug, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

[14] X-efficiency depends on organisation and management. See Leibenstein, H., 'Allocative Efficiency vs. "X-Efficiency"', *American Economic Review*, Vol. 61, 1966, pp. 392-414.

examined some of their equity and efficiency implications. However, it must be acknowledged that social welfare cannot be rigorously defined, and as a result, the observations about LAFH allowances that have been discussed might attract other interpretations. After consideration of the particular circumstances of isolated families what has been suggested in this instance is that allowances are probably deficient in some ways with respect to equity and efficiency. Nevertheless better alternatives, judged on these two economic criteria, are difficult to find.

The In-School Situation

Of all the aspects of education which must be considered when education among rural residents is being examined, none is more pertinent than the in-school situation. It is, after all, what so many of the other aspects of rural education are ultimately concerned with. Theories and purposes of education are debated, community needs delineated, systems organised, public money appropriated, facilities provided and teachers deployed all to establish a classroom. What then goes on in that classroom may be the result of many forces but is the most important variable in the process. In the politics of education too often the most important element of the educational establishment, the teacher-student relationship in school is neglected. Fortunately, the Perth conference on rural education did not overlook the crux of the whole enterprise, the in-school situation, and the following papers speak to this subject from several points of view.

The first article in Part Five was given as one of the conference lead addresses by Professor Urban Dahllöf. Professor Dahllöf's paper serves as an especially appropriate overview of the in-school situation. It is followed by papers that cover such varied topics as teacher training for rural classrooms, considerations in rural curricula, correspondence schools, and schools for special populations, notably Aboriginal children and children with physical and intellectual handicaps. Each of these topics could fill volumes in their own right, but the writers whose papers do appear have provided a good cross-section of in-school issues. Taken collectively they speak to the complexity of problems associated with actually providing instruction in rural settings.

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PART FIVE

The In-School Situation

Problems of Curriculum and Staffing in Rural Schools

URBAN DAHLLÖF

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Problems of Curriculum and Staffing in Rural Schools

Policy, Practice and Theory at the Crossroads

The problems of curriculum and staffing in rural education represent something of a crossroad between policy, practice and theory. Crossroads may, however, take many shapes with regard to the landscape and its topographical characteristics. Roads may cross in a village in the country-side, and that village may also offer an inn or even a motel where people may stop for a while or even hold a conference with a pleasant exchange of ideas; yet, afterwards, the participants may continue in their original directions according to the well-known pattern of 'hello-goodbye', the term having been coined by Hathaway (1948) for validation studies in guidance and therapy.

Another crossroad variety may come up when roads are few and narrow but loaded with heavy traffic. Some of the drivers may be in a hurry or have broad, prestigious vehicles. Then clashes may occur; people get angry and he who runs the smallest car may even prefer to make a detour into an open field in order to avoid a conflict. There is even a third kind of crossroad in sight, which we may approach towards the end of this paper but not until we have ourselves made some detours into a quite unstructured field of problems about rural schools and their curricula.

All speakers, from politicians to researchers, approach their topics with a certain background and from a specific point of view. As for so many others, my own road to rural education is both a particularly urban and a typically Swedish one, connected as it is with comprehensive general school reforms comprising many organizational changes. Even if Australia and Sweden are roughly comparable in some basic background factors such as population density and degree of centralization (cf. Dahllöf 1977) this does not imply that we are totally justified to draw conclusions from one country to the other, especially not in curriculum matters where so much depends both upon the absolute size of the community and of the distance between home and school as well as on the cultural climate and social values. Australia in general and Western Australia in particular is, indeed, not only fascinating but also unique with regard to its enormous variation between the extremes of living conditions. Thus, even though 'the tyranny of distance'—to quote the title of that fascinating book by Geoffrey Blainey (1966)—sets limits for our generalizations about specific solutions to various problems, there is, nevertheless, a common denominator of problem dimensions involved.

Besides the strongly felt need to promote general education, the main motive for the Swedish comprehensive school reform, with one common system of primary and secondary schools running parallel to each other for several years, was to even out

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social differences in the enrolment to senior high school and to the universities. As part of this policy, the comprehensive school reform was regarded as an important step in creating equality of living conditions between rural and urban areas. It was for that reason heavily supported also by the Swedish Agrarian Party (as the name was at that time). With the exception of some problems about how classes should be organized at the upper, junior secondary section, which were to be taught by secondary school teachers, specializing in two or three subject-matter areas, the reform was accepted by all political parties in parliament.

In the countryside, the new junior secondary stage of grades 7-9 was to be located in quite big consolidated schools which could offer all the new options. The competition between different villages to get these schools was hard. It is, therefore, something of an irony of fate, that within ten years a great number of these schools, the location of which had been very carefully planned with regard to the demography and economy of the region, were suffering from a decreasing number of students to the extent that—according to traditional Swedish standards of school finance—they were rapidly approaching a limit where they were running the risk of being closed down. As one means of avoiding this, an experiment was set up with a non-graded instruction in a number of subjects, which means that students who formally belong to grades 7, 8, and 9 to a considerable extent have their lessons together. In the so-called PANG (Process Analysis of Non-Grading) Project, we have tried to make an evaluation of this experiment to keep the small junior high school alive in the local community as long as possible and in spite of a decreasing number of students (Dahllöf 1973, Andrae 1976).

In this connection as well as in some earlier research on ability grouping (Dahllöf 1971), two main problems have emerged both of which are related to the curriculum. One has to do with the relationship between ideals and reality, ends and means or curriculum goals on the one hand and teaching strategies and learning processes on the other. The other has to do with the influence of the environment on the educational processes and outcomes within the school.

The importance of distance has been emphasized many times and for good reasons during this conference. Let us now look at decision-making about curricular goals from that specific point of view. If the distance between ends and means is short, the whole thing is trivial and uninspiring; if the gap is too wide, it will rapidly be regarded as hopelessly unrealistic and will for that reason fail to have any impact on those administrators, teachers and school leaders who have to transform the curriculum intentions into classroom practice. So far, a certain amount of creative tension between ideals and reality seems to be necessary for a change of practice and for a real development of the school.

I am, of course, well aware of the fact that the relationship between ends and means is somewhat more complicated than is spelt out here, that certain educational processes (at least up to a certain level) may be or should be regarded as an end in themselves and that setting of educational goals at least under certain circumstances, can include the students themselves in the decision-making process. However, I will not go into details in any of these respects, except for making the general statement that even in these cases the decisions about goals to be reached and means to be used

implies a political act, since it quite simply means that we give priority to some important values over others. Perhaps it would not be politics, if we had no limits of resources. But we have, indeed, restrictions both in terms of money for salaries, buildings and equipment and—no less important—in terms of time for the student's learning at school and at home. When the total time available is considered as a constraining factor, even the educational optimism which might stem from the Ben Bloom principle of mastery learning (Bloom 1968, 1970*a*, *b*) at the final end leads back to the philosophical and political priority problems of curriculum goals: Which are the basic skills that under all circumstances should be mastered by most pupils in all environments? To what extent are there specific needs common to pupils in a rural setting as opposed to an urban one? (cf. Dahllöf 1978).

Decision-making about curricula, general goals and contents or more specific objectives, timetables and recommendations about methods of instruction, all rest upon assumptions about the realities in schools and classrooms. Sometimes these assumptions are stated explicitly, more often they are just taken for granted in a more implicit way. And here the researcher comes back again through the classroom door: these assumptions can, in principle be false or true or at least more or less probable. Consequently they lend themselves to empirical test. Most recommendations about actions to be taken in everyday political life are based on relatively vague preconceptions, that if a certain change is made in the school organisation or in the classroom practice, this will affect the performance or attitudes of students in a certain way. The better we understand what really happens at school under certain conditions and why it happens, the more it is likely that the gap between ideals and reality can approach a creative optimum of tension. Thus, good sense for realities may be the best servant to educational ideals and to educational progress.

Let us now sum up some implications of what has been said so far in order to relate it to the specific problems of curriculum and staffing in rural schools.

1. Curriculum goals and objectives cannot be treated as isolated school phenomena. They have to be related to the specific needs of the surrounding society which in their turn are dependent on the total economic, demographic, social and cultural situation.
2. The role of the school and its curriculum should be seen in the perspective of the total situation of the pupil, for example, with respect to family and peer-group relations, church affiliation, membership in local associations and participation in various other extra-curricular activities.
3. When, finally, it comes to the situation within the school, the whole chain of events should be considered from curriculum goals, through the specific school environment, available resources and actual teaching practice down to learning outcomes of different kinds. To the school environment belongs the staff but also other more specific factors like administrative rules for grouping and class-size. Earlier research in our project group has especially concentrated on the often subtle but strongly cumulative influence of such parts of the school environment which in principle can be changed by decisions on higher administrative levels, but which from the teacher's point of

> view are quite fixed, given conditions for a considerable amount of time, for example, a school year. For teachers and students these conditions act as something like a quite fixed frame, within which they have to perform their teaching—learning duties. We have named these conditions frame-factors to distinguish them from other parts of the environment which are outside the influence of any school authority.

Now, on each of these three points, it occurs to me that rural education does mean something of a specific challenge.

Concerning the first point, curriculum in relation to societal needs in general, the rural challenge is about the school's relations to local industries and life as a citizen in a rural community. What I have in mind is primarily the total curriculum through all the grades and particularly those programs and optional subjects that are offered to the final grades of the compulsory school and in the senior high school. School cannot be expected to be a main agent in the creating of jobs, and the mere presence of a small junior high school does not necessarily lead to anything other than a moratorium as regards the time for the pupils' migration to more urbanized areas. However there is no doubt that this is important to families since it means that children can be kept at home during the important ages from fourteen to sixteen.

In some cases, however, as in Sweden during the last ten years, the general curriculum is mainly built up on the basis of an urban, industrial frame of reference. This may be unavoidable in countries where the proportion of the population gainfully occupied in agriculture or forestry is less than ten per cent. But when the number of options in addition to this is quite limited and, moreover, when the options offered either are of a quite academic kind or mainly directed towards urban industries, the net effect may be that the school's curriculum does not even offer any kind of support for local needs. If the local adaptation is very low, the curriculum structure can even be said to force the students to move from the rural areas in order to get an appropriate further training.

On this particular point the two Scandinavian countries of Sweden and Norway have been something of a contrast to each other. During the last decade, Sweden wiped out almost all practical options. This was based on national statistics only, without any break-down with regard to regions or specified subgroups of students. The practical options were, however, very popular in many rural schools, but even if they were made use of by up to, say, forty per cent of the pupils, there is no chance for any considerable impact on the grand totals for the whole nation, due to the minority status of rural areas. However, a new curriculum reform, passed by parliament in May 1979, will lead to a return to a greater number of options of all kinds and, more importantly, to an increased local influence on what options should be offered.

In this regard Sweden is following the lead of Norway, where for some time local freedom has been considerable and small schools are numerous. The Norwegian geography with its many fishing towns and villages on a small slice of land at the seashore in the shadow of quite high and steep mountains, puts quite specific restrictions on what can be done. The curvy, steep roads, which often are not open in

wintertime, do not invite extensive bussing, nor are the slow boat or ferry rides always to be recommended in stormy weather. So Norway is, especially in its northern parts, captured in something like an all-or-nothing dilemma: Either a small school in the local village—or a boarding system for the children. With regard to the adaptation of the curriculum to local needs, the Norwegians have launched some programs aimed at strengthening the bonds between school and the fishing industries. A certain preparatory guidance program has been worked out, a prolonged period of practice has been arranged on the fishing boats and this takes place during the ordinary fishing season. The whole project is supervised and evaluated by Professor Solstad at the University of Tromsö (Högmo and Solstad 1975. cf. also Solstad 1969, Tronvoll 1977).

However, the adaptation to local needs has its limits. Once again, if great interest is created in options or branches aiming at a preparation for occupations in local industries cannot be met by reasonable chances for job opportunities, frustration and disappointment will occur. The total curriculum must be both realistic and meaningful for the student up to his final grades. This problem of balance is, of course, a difficult one. Even though there may be job opportunities, the school should not compel the student to move if he does not want to; nor should the school press those to stay in the local community whose ambitions and aptitudes point in another direction.

I have not said very much about the curricula in the primary grades, the problems of an urban or rural frame of reference, the inclusion of curriculum programs of a specific rural kind, the importance of resource centres for the provision of specific curriculum materials, teaching aids and so on. What I have seen during the school visits in Australia has convinced me that I have very little to add in this area.

So far we have kept our discussion of rural-urban problems within the limits of the dominating cultural pattern; and this line will also be followed for the remaining parts of this paper. Everybody in this audience is probably aware of the problems associated with cultural minority groups among immigrants from different countries or among Aboriginal peoples. Some of these problems are—so far as I can see—so profound and so difficult that I have hesitated to take them up at all, since one should need a special lecture—and another speaker—for that entire topic in order to have a chance to treat these problems in a fair way. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to talk about curriculum problems without mentioning cultural minority groups.

These problems are difficult in my own country, too. We have the Lappish minority, the problems of which are common to Sweden and Norway. And we have a great many immigrants from southern Europe, the Middle East and recently from south-east Asia. Some of the immigrants have by now been in our country so long, that specific problems connected with the second generation have emerged, problems related to differences in level of aspiration between parents' and pupils' frames of reference, marginality and quite concrete difficulties on the labour market. These problems are in turn related to a lower enrolment in senior high school and technical and further education. In their turn, these problems may reflect differences and difficulties related to the extent to which these groups perceive the upper section of the comprehensive school to be meaningful for them.

The problems that have been outlined so far, are of course, quite general. In as much as any of the minority groups are concentrated in certain rural areas or—as in the case of our Lappish minority—are those who originally lived there and used the land, specific problems may arise. These problems are mainly due to the conflicts and tensions that emerge when people with different life styles or cultural patterns live close to each other and at the same time have to share more limited resources of public facilities and work opportunities than those which may be at hand in an urban setting. Moreover, the problems easily gain another dimension because groups at the national level may appear as quite small minorities in the statistics while those within a certain region may represent a much greater proportion of the population or even dominate in numbers. What I want to emphasize here is, quite simply, the possible need for a greater flexibility in curriculum planning in favour of an extended and more profound treatment of items related to minority cultures in order to promote mutual understanding and respect especially among those who in everyday life at school and in the neighbourhood live close to each other.

The rural situation also highlights the problem of curriculum in relation to unemployment among school leavers, even though no specific blame is to be put on rural schools in this respect. In many Western economies youth unemployment has been a severe problem for several years, and the situation may become especially difficult for those students from the countryside who have moved to metropolitan areas but have not been able to get a job. A special risk group are those low-motivated pupils who do not continue to any vocational training and who may leave the compulsory school without a sufficient performance level in the basic skills. I do not think that Sweden is the only country which has encountered increased problems of this kind, probably due to profound long-term changes in the labour market. In an expanding economy such as during the 1960s these students were absorbed by the labour market, but now we meet many of them as cases for the social welfare system or as participants in remedial training courses for unemployed adults. The problem takes on a dimension of tragedy when unemployment is what meets the young school leaver. If we accept it as a decent goal to prepare all students for participation in our society, to have a job and to act as a responsible citizen, then I cannot regard it as anything else other than a failure of all our societal efforts if the former student's first start in life after school is unemployment with all that that means.

It is true that schools do not carry the main responsibility for this disastrous development, but when we look at school and curriculum from the point of view of society at large, I cannot come to any other conclusion than that school must share the responsibility with other societal agencies. In these days when, the world over, it is so common to pay special attention to the gifted child, I think the labour market problems and the not too optimistic trends for the future make it as important to care for and give appropriate quality in the instruction of the slow learner at his or her level of ability. Also from an economic point of view (if that type of argument is needed), what is, after all, the point in a system, which in the first place stamps out a number of students as inferior both in self-confidence and in basic skills and then spends vast amounts of money on them under other budget labels in various kinds of social welfare programs or unemployment schemes? The needs of this potential risk

group among the students point in the direction of an increased demand for flexibility in the curriculum, for increased use of programs which already before school-leaving age give the student some realistic work experience and perhaps also a platform for further employment. We may also need a greater variation of apprentice programs and other types of mixed theoretical schooling and practical training.

The problems of youth unemployment bring us to the general problems of the future development of working life. It may be true, or inevitable or even wanted (by whom?) that in the future we will be unable to create employment for everybody. Work-sharing may or may not be a solution—my own point here is that whatever solution we have to choose for the mature generation, society must by all means take responsibility for giving the new generation a real chance to get a good start on the labour market. One step in that direction may be a greater flexibility in the curriculum, another step some kind of *youth guarantee*, like that which is being worked out in Sweden. And for those of you, who may be especially suspicious about socialistic trends in the Scandinavian countries the youth guarantee was launched by a non-labour government and its details are now in the hands of a conservative minister for schools. In my opinion, it is quite simply just and in line with the best humanistic foundations of education, if society takes on a responsibility according to the principles outlined above.

The last point I would like to make as regards our first problem about curriculum and society at large, has to do with recurrent education or the closely associated principles of permanent education and lifelong learning. This problem area has already been the topic for many international conferences, so in this connection I would like to take up a few points with special relevance for rural education.

The specific point for rural education is, of course, the need for provision of adult technical and further education of various levels and in different types of rural areas, and for a systematic strategy of planning, so that rural areas may get their share of the new opportunities for studies in mature ages. In this and other respects, it should be kept in mind that rural areas are by no means limited to farming but may cover most occupational areas from mining to helicopter services. Although much lip-service has been paid to the area of recurrent education, Australia in general and rural Australia in particular offer an exceptional testing field of great interest for an international public. The survey by Duke (1974) and the principles underlying the Karmel report on Open Tertiary Education (1975) are important steps based upon the patterns for external studies which long since have been practised in Australia. Also the Australian regional or community colleges are of great interest in this connection and here I would like to refer to several studies made by Don Anderson and his collaborators (Anderson *et al* 1975; Anderson, Batt and Rosenberg 1976. cf. also Anwyl 1979, Nilsson and Sheldrake 1979).

Let us now make a somewhat shorter stop at the second issue about the rural curriculum seen in the perspective of the total situation of the pupil and his development. There is probably no need for reminding a qualified audience like this, to pay due attention to the entire child. But it is easier said than done, when it comes to the realities of educational planning, especially when the economic times are hard and administrators are pressing for cost-effctiveness and accountability. Also for educa-

tional researchers who want to advise teachers and administrators about evaluation of the effects of schooling under various conditions, the task is quite difficult, since it demands experience not only from educational measurement in terms of interpretation of scores on achievement tests and attitude scales, but also from the assessments of environments in a sociological perspective.

The whole situation of the pupil may be described in many ways and even novels like *Childhood at Brindabella* (Franklin 1963/74) may be an important source of inspiration for the educational researcher and evaluator. In the American sociological tradition of community studies (cf. Arensberg 1954). I would like to draw your attention to a quite interesting and from a methodological point of view still relevant Australian piece of research by Jack Campbell (1962), under the title *Growing Up in Karribee*, a study of child growth and development in an Australian rural community. The most recent contribution to this kind of research is a book with the almost parallel title *Growing up American* by Alan Peshkin (1978), who (without reference to Campbell) takes a more anthropological approach to the subject. In both cases, the focus is on the interplay of different socialisation agents upon the students with special regard to the transmission of values, and their general effects on personality development. However, none of these studies puts any greater emphasis on the teaching-learning processes in the classroom.

What then does an integrated approach which takes the teaching-learning situation at school into account and pays due justice to outside school influences in the family, the peer groups and other influential sources, mean? Well the project about non-graded rural junior high schools which I have mentioned and for which I am ultimately responsible is one example of how we may develop our thinking about these things.

First of all, we try to study the classroom situation, the teachers' planning of a new or for them strongly modified way of instruction, through the teaching-learning process proper to the oucomes of different kinds. These data are then supplemented both by questionnaires and interviews with the students about how they spend their leisure time, their plans for the future, their attitudes and so on. Also parents and a great number of people, who have contact with the students in various capacities, were interviewed, from the school nurse, a very important person in every kind of school, to the clergyman. The main point I would like to emphasize here, however, is the way in which comparisons are planned to be made in the final report. We found that the most relevant question was the following: Our five non-graded schools have deliberately entered upon an experiment in order to avoid being closed down due to a decreasing number of students. *What would happen to the students if the school really had been closed down?* Two main alternatives emerged. One was bussing over extremely long distances (for Swedish conditions) to another, slightly bigger but still relatively small school, in which the teaching strategies applied are quite traditional. Since comprehensive schools with a junior high school section were from the beginning located at considerable distances from each other, a second more probable alternative would be boarding in a middle-size town combined with going to a quite big consolidated comprehensive school. These students have a chance to go home only over the weekends. Consequently, our comparison groups

were set up according to these criteria of combined school situation and living conditions. For each group we tried to map out the total situation both at school, at home and at leisure time. We have also tried to describe the historical and cultural, political and religious background of the different communities in which these schools find themselves, and the project is partly a cross-disciplinary one, mainly through the co-operation with researchers in geography at the University of Umeå (Hammarberg and Lundquist, 1978).

The general way of thinking may be described as ecological. If the acronym of AAA had not already been adopted by American (or perhaps even Australian) Automobile Associations, I would have chosen that abbreviation for an *A*lternative *A*ctions *A*pproach, indicating the very core of the message: Which are the most probable *alternative solutions* to a problem?, *Under which environmental frame conditions do these alternatives have to operate,* and with *what effects for the total development of the pupils*? And, by the way, an AAA-abbreviation would, indeed, make sense also with respect to its demands on an intensive as well as an extensive field work: I have myself never driven my car so many kilometres as when I spent a sabbatical in the Swedish forests and mountain areas, doing part of the field work as one of my own research assistants.

I have already mentioned that when one investigates what takes place within a school or classroom, it has to some extent proved to be fruitful to consider also the constraining influence of certain environmental frame factors. In our studies of rural schools, this way of thinking may be applied also to the total situation of the pupil; and particularly so, when one has in mind how distance and the use of time for different purposes are interrelated. As compared with living relatively close to a small school, many hours on the school bus may, of course, imply that the child visits a school with more physical facilities and a greater number of possible peer group relations both during lessons and breaks; but on the other hand it takes away a substantial amount of time that could have been spent in a more creative way at home or in the peer group nearby. And to the amount of time spent in the bus should be added the amount of time needed to overcome the fatigue and tension caused by long travel in a sometimes overcrowded, noisy bus environment. Moreover, while both small neighbourhood schools and bussing allow the kids to live at home, boarding with home-visits as in Sweden only over the weekends or—as in Australia—even more seldom, has its specific pattern of characteristics. I probably do not even need to spell out the possible advantages and disadvantages of this alternative. Let me only point out, that the final assessment of the main alternatives in relation to each other will depend on several factors such as the absolute size of distance and isolation, the age of the pupils concerned, career plans as well as tradition, which may partly explain why some people are prepared to pay a high price for quality while others are not.

Which, then, were the outcomes of our studies about the three main action alternatives for junior high school pupils, fourteen to sixteen years old?

All details have not yet been worked out, but there is already sufficient evidence (Andrae, 1979) that there were no significant differences of any kind in the basic skills or in any other cognitive area. In relation to the expectations and the fears that

some people had, this is, indeed, a positive finding from the point of view of the experimental schools, since there was a risk, that our secondary school teachers would not be able to adapt their planning and teaching to the new conditions to the extent that the standards of intellectual outcomes could remain the same. No doubt there were those who were prepared to pay some price at the expense of the achievement level for the mere favour of having their children close to home. However, we could not find any losses of that kind when we kept initial ability constant, so the critical question about the tolerance limits never came up. Quite the contrary. The educational processes in terms of a greater *variation* of different instructional methods and in terms of a more frequent use of group work as well as of various forms of independent studies showed up a more positive pattern of findings in the small and experimental schools. In fact, the pattern of working forms in the small schools was very much in line with the general recommendations for all schools according to the preceding curriculum reform (Andrae 1979). Moreover, the attitudes of the pupils towards school and teachers were definitely more positive in these classes. We also got some independent support pointing in the same direction from another project in the primary grades, when isolated children in small schools were compared with other children with respect to academic performance and language development (Raberg 1979).

The project quite soon recognized that besides the experimental condition of a non-graded instruction as compared with a relatively conventional one, another thing came out as an important frame factor, *viz. school-size*. And this gives me a good reason to say some words about the third issue concerning the need to better understand the factors that are in action when it comes to implementation of curriculum intentions into classroom practice under realistic conditions as regards staffing, available teaching aids and constraining frame factors such as size of school and class, grouping procedures, total time available for different subjects, and so on.

For a long time educational research about such ecological frame factors has suffered from being confined to not very sensitive in-out—output analyses with scores on standardized achievement tests as the main outcome measure. Most often, studies of this kind have ended up in non-significant differences in the basic skills and the common core in social studies and science. But basics are basics and as such so important that the great majority of the pupils simply have to master these skills in order to be able to continue to higher levels or to be able to perform everyday duties in practical life.

But the time for attaining a reasonable level of performance among the majority of the children may make a difference if the class is big and heavy to teach; if more lesson time is needed on elementary curriculum units, the less time there is left for more advanced things or for special enrichment exercises. Also with regard to working methods, a big or otherwise heavy class sometimes makes it more or less impossible for the teacher to individualise instruction. So, even if we expect the teachers to master not only the curriculum but also the actual classroom situation, pressing environmental conditions combined with time restrictions or too high demands, may, in fact, have the reverse effect to the extent that the teacher in a subtle but

nevertheless efficient way becomes something of a victim of the dynamics of the situation (cf. Dahllöf 1974).

As regards size of school and class more detailed research than ours has recently revealed quite a lot of interesting patterns. A report by Campbell (1979) makes a strong case in favour of the small school as regards the personality development of the pupils. Even though the author himself admits, that the more detailed classroom procedures were unknown to him, it should be pointed out that neither the teacher personality nor environmental factors like school size can be expected to have any substantial direct impact upon the pupils. These factors all operate through the teaching-learning processes and the various patterns of interactions which may take somewhat different turns in a small and in a big setting. An excellent illustration of this is the dissertation by Warren Hawkins (1979) at James Cook University of North Queensland. Hawkins combined American methods (Bellack *et al.*, 1968) for studies of classroom processes with the Swedish theories about frame factors—and in all essentials he found in favour of the small setting.

In our own experimental schools, which were running a real risk of being closed down, the teachers were under some pressure from outside and got highly motivated to keep their school and, thus, to enter upon the experiment. The non-experimental small schools were not under the same threat, but still the same size and informal setting seemed to stimulate them to do a good professional job which gives them—if nothing else—personal rewards in return from the kids as opposed to the sometimes heavy and anonymous atmosphere that may come out of a big consolidated school with, say, five to six parallel classes in each grade.

Yet, it has to be borne in mind that smallness is a relative matter. There may be critical limits both at the lower and upper end of the distribution: a still lower number of students does not necessarily lead to an improved instruction.

The three challenges dealt with in this paper lead to a demand for a comprehensive view on curriculum and teaching in relation both to the problems of staffing, teaching aids and specific obstacles in the micro-environment of the single classroom and to the relationship between curricula programs and society at large as illustrated here by the problems of unemployment.

With regard to the creativity and imagination demonstrated by the Western Australian authorities in their endeavours to solve the many difficulties at the school level, it seems to me that there are more remaining, difficult problems to be tackled when it comes to the balance between the total school curriculum, recurrent and adult education in relation to the needs of society at large.

The type of crossroad which policy, practice and research in rural education has been approaching for some time seems to me to bear a resemblance to a junction, in which travellers from different starting points join each other in order to continue together towards a common goal. But junctions vary, from the big one where two highways merge to small ones between rivers, that mostly are dry but sometimes flood. We should not underestimate the importance of junctions in the outback, neither geographically nor symbolically, just as in the same way we should not underestimate the field of rural education as it relates to education at large.

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PART FIVE

The In-School Situation

Pre-Service Teacher Training for Rural Schools

PAMELA E. YOUNG

Pre-Service Teacher Training for Rural Schools

The majority of our teachers are trained in teacher education institutions that are for the most part located in urban areas. There is little opportunity to teach in a rural school or to acquire some understanding and knowledge of the nature of the sparsely populated teaching environment. It is important that we prepare teachers as effectively as possible for the rural situation since it is likely that many will spend at least a year of their teaching life away from the urban areas.

The importance of induction for teaching in rural schools is underlined by what we now expect our rural teachers to do in addition to the traditional tasks. We ask them to be versatile, adept at improving current educational offerings, skilled in creating new ones, competent in evaluation and to take a leading part in directing their own improved functioning.[1] These varied demands when coupled with new developments like the move towards schools having freedom to innovate, means that the complexity of the teacher's work has become even more marked. We also expect the teacher to be responsible for the all-round development of *each* child under his care. This is a formidable undertaking. All of this we ask of a teacher whether he be a new recruit or an 'old hand' working, perhaps alone, in a school where the contact with other professionals is often infrequent. Such is the extent of these demands upon teachers, that a variety of support services from teacher education institutions as well as the state education service is required if effective teaching is to be achieved in our rural schools. Three questions come to mind here for consideration: what special pre-service teacher training is desirable to prepare teachers specifically for appointments to rural schools; how might pre-service teacher trainees acquire this special training, and what are the implications for teachers' careers and future appointments in such special training?

Teaching in a Rural School

Before examining the first question it is necessary to explore the aspects which can be thought to differentiate the rural school from its urban counterpart and underline specific professional needs for this setting. These aspects may seem only too obvious, but in the context of the theme of pre-service teacher training it can be helpful to have some of them in mind when devising initial teacher programs. Only three examples are given here for the sake of brevity, but obviously there are others.

[1] *The Schools Commission Report for the Triennium 1979-1981*, had this to say, 'The Commission reaffirms that, through the [Services and Development] Program the teaching profession should take a leading part in directing its own improved functioning'. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978, p. 89.

The distance between schools may be such, or the terrain so forbidding, that the kind of informal and formal professional interchange that occurs almost as a matter of course in urban areas is absent. I am thinking here not only of the communication between a large number of teachers within a school, but also of the contact through teacher associations, the teachers' centre and other bodies. The absence of this reciprocity can accentuate a sense of professional isolation in a teacher.

A number of the skills we acquire as teachers such as organising the classroom, encouraging learning (the list is a long one) are introduced in pre-service training but developed 'on the job'. Where there are a number of colleagues available in a school, a teacher has a group against which to measure the different aspects of his professional work and progress accordingly. This group of teachers can also provide professional support[2] of a varied kind that new as well as experienced teachers, who are expected to be omni-competent, value.

Undoubtedly community concern and involvement in schools has grown in the past few years. What has tended to be emphasised here in this context is an increase in parental participation in the schools of various kinds. For urban schools, community involvement has been through the form of organised groups in a structured manner, parent-teacher association activities, regular open days, fetes, galas and so on. However, the scattered population of a rural area find it difficult to respond in the same way. This can be disappointing both from the teacher and parent point of view. Parental involvement does not stop at the social activities, increasingly questions are being asked about curriculum content relevant to the rural community. Whether we are talking about social or academic matters it is the teacher in the rural community who is expected to give a lead and to actively promote and facilitate community involvement. All three of these aspects of the rural teaching environment are tasks the teacher new to teaching in such an area needs to be not only acquainted with, but to have had the opportunity to discuss them with fellow professionals before taking up his appointment and to have been inducted into ideas and skills which may offer some preparation for the work ahead. There is a tendency once a teacher is appointed to a post not to have the chance of seeing other schools and the way they work. This is true of both urban and rural institutions. From discussions with post graduate teachers who have had the opportunity to visit a range of schools, the exchange of ideas can prove professionally invaluable. What is implied here in using the term 'range', is with regard to size of school, pupil intake (does for example one ethnic group predominate? If it does, what are the implications for teaching?), age range and extent of the catchment area (what particular educational problems for the pupil and the teacher can be identified?). Where such visits are planned and the would-be teachers well briefed, the follow-up seminars can provide a number of ideas and material for the teaching task.

'Culture shock' is a problem often experienced by the urban teacher working in a rural environment for the first time when surveying the marked differences between the two situations. Such 'culture shock' may well initially diminish his chances of

[2] The *Schools Commission Report for the Triennium 1976-8*, 'Perhaps the most important single grouping for developmental activities is the total group involved in the work of the school'. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975, p. 185.

making an effective professional start to the job in hand. Where it is possible we should try to minimise this difficulty. A teacher could, as part of his training, be required to spend a short time in a school which will be similar to the one in which he will take up a permanent appointment. We could work alongside a serving teacher acting as his professional tutor for that period. Such a practice, if feasible in an area as big as Western Australia, may go some way to lessening the sense of isolation and other manifestations of 'culture shock'.

Skills for the Rural Teacher

Such a recommendation as school visiting is of a general kind. Much more specific, is the promotion and training in skills and tasks thought appropriate to the rural teacher. The first skill to promote, it is suggested, is that of intellectual flexibility. For teachers in remote areas, remaining intellectually flexible—open to new knowledge and ideas—is dependent not only upon access to printed and other materials, but also in acquiring study skills. A teacher may well find himself faced with a mass of teaching matter but not have the skills with which to evaluate, and adapt them to the needs of individual pupils. The tendency then for the teacher may be to work systematically through a text or program of work because it is there to be taught and learned rather than looking at it professionally, devising ways of presenting it imaginatively to stimulate learning on the part of the child. The objectives of pre-service teacher training derived from these comments could well include:

1. The teacher will have seen, discussed and used some of the teaching materials for the coming academic year; and
2. encouraged to produce ideas on how they might be used, test and evaluate the outcomes;
3. stimulated to plan what support might be required to assist the teaching, for example, additions to the teaching sources available such as visual or audio materials;
4. know where to look for supporting materials like the 'Language and Learning Project'; and
5. understand the support services available and how to set about calling for their assistance.

The aim underlying these objectives would be to develop the skills of self sufficiency so essential to the rural teacher.

A number of teachers when teaching for the first time in a rural situation are unaware of the decision-making structures of a large (eight or more teachers) school and its administrative style. It can happen that the teacher quickly adopts the 'restricted professional'[1] model rather than the 'extended professional' model which is thought desirable for effective teacher development. There is talk for example of 'my class' and 'my room'. Identification of this kind is laudable and understandable

[1] Hoyle, E. 'Leadership and Decision-Making in Education' in Hughes, M. (ed) *Administering Education: International Challenge*. London: Athlone Press of the University of London, 1975, p. 37.

since the major satisfaction of teaching is working with children. However, this attitude may be a limiting factor in encouraging teacher awareness not only of the community in which the school is located, but of other teachers and the 'whole school' environment.

Many more decisions than formerly, particularly in relation to the curriculum, and its development, devolve upon the Australian school and its teachers. A collegial model of decision-making is being encouraged, particularly where curriculum change is concerned. This represents a shift in thinking from curriculum planning that is entirely centralized to one where the school is seen as the most significant unit for change and teachers are the most appropriate source of ideas for developmental activities. For many schools this change in thinking is a major departure not only in decision-making structures but also in curriculum planning. It may well be that rural schools which are just beginning work of this kind will have little opportunity to develop the new teacher's competence in this respect, at least in the early stages of his career. Some induction into the changing nature of ideas where curriculum decision-making is concerned may well form part of a pre-service program for the would-be rural teacher. Brief reference has been made to trends like curriculum development and involvement in curriculum decisions which the new recruit will be required to be aware of as part of the contextual framework within which he will be working. Awareness, however, in itself is insufficient. 'Back-up' services—ideas, materials, techniques—like simulation and in-tray work are also required, otherwise the pre-service training in this respect may become just an academic exercise with little practical application.

Special Training Needs?

There is no clear cut answer to this question of special training needs and how they might be acquired. A number of rural schools may well be accessible to the urban college of education. There is, though, the problem for such schools, of 'over-exposure' and for the institutions themselves, the suitability of these schools for teacher training. Part of the answer to the question may well lie in the kind of regional career profile[4] the teacher training institutions and the State education department have in mind. If the professional life of a teacher is seen as a whole rather than piecemeal then the role of the teacher education institutions is one of induction into modes of thinking and skills without attempting to train for a

[4] In England and Wales, all in-service training is voluntary and a very substantial number of teachers (the actual proportion is disputed) are never involved in any form of teacher development. In order to tap this source and to complement rather than overlap, teacher education institutions need to do two things: develop a regional career profile of the teachers and engage in some market research to establish what is in demand. A regional career profile in which the stages in a teacher's career are related to development requirements might look like this:

(a) A teacher needs to be initiated successfully into his professional career in a specific school. In England, a professional tutor (an inexperienced teacher) assists in conjunction with the LEA advisory service.

(b) There follows . . . four to six years when a young teacher needs to consolidate his professional confidence . . . This is probably best achieved by a series of relatively short specific courses provided by both LEA and teacher education institutes and based in one of a group of schools.

'finished product'. In the recent past so much has been demanded of teacher education institutions that their resources have been overstretched rather than allowing them to concentrate solely on induction for the teacher in training.

A second part of the answer to the question may be found in a greater awareness and understanding of the reciprocal nature of work undertaken by schools and teacher education institutes in teacher training for rural areas. For example, in England the role of 'professional tutor' (a teacher serving in the school) has emerged, whose prime responsibility is for the probationer teacher. Quite often as part of their work they supervise teachers on training practice in conjunction with the college tutors. Both college and school benefit from the experience. The student teacher is encouraged to develop teaching skills and materials for use in their teaching, and later on these skills and materials are then integrated into his college program. In his turn, the 'professional tutor' teacher acquires or develops evaluation skills and actively participates in college courses. The college lecturer is able to take back practical information which can inform theory and be fed back into his college work. This intelligence gathering by teacher education institutions might well be what Scriven[5] calls 'summative evaluation'. Such evaluation can promote a responsive dynamic teacher training program for rural education. Information gathering of this kind, however, is often of an ad hoc nature. What is being advocated there is a systematic organised evaluation linked with 'formative evaluation.[6] in order to provide regular feed-back to teachers in training and the teachers in the school which will enable both groups to monitor their own subsequent performance. None of what has been discussed is necessarily new. What is being advocated is perhaps a fresh look at existing practices and the current provision for short teaching experiences in remote rural areas; extended visits of the kind suggested earlier; the bringing in more frequently of teachers from rural areas (these might already be in the institution for a term's in-service); and the links established with the State education service.[7]

[4] (c) After some five to eight years, there is a need for a teacher to reflect . . . and consider . . . the direction of his career . . . This would seem an appropriate time for an in-depth course, part- or full-time, serviced by the teacher education institution.

(d) Following this period of study . . . there would seem to be the need for further study on a part-time/full-time basis . . . to give teachers the opportunity to develop specialist expertise and knowledge.

(e) After twelve to fifteen years, . . . a number of teachers will need to re-equip themselves . . . for new and substantial responsibilities. This would be an appropriate time for advanced studies . . . requiring a substantial period of release—at least one term and in some cases a year.

(f) After a mid-career point . . . it is possible to identify two groups of teachers with distinct needs . . . a relatively small number . . . will need to be prepared for top management . . . There is also a more substantial group . . . who may not have . . . prospect of advancement . . . The major need for this group is for refreshment.

Source: Advisory Committee on the Supply and Training of Teachers (ACSTT) 1974, In-service Education and Training: some considerations DES, mimeo.

[5] Scriven, M. 'The Methodology of Evaluation', in Worthen, B. R. & Sanders, J. R. (eds.) *Education Evaluation Theory and Practice*. Worthington, Ohio: C. A. Jones, 1973.

[6] Ibid.

[7] An example of this is the English DES/Regional Courses which are located in teacher education institutions. They are in six parts with parts 1, 3 and 5 being taught in the university, college or polytechnic, and 4 and 6 at the local or regional level.

The Implications for Special Training

Having briefly suggested that a re-evaluation of the rural school and the teacher training institution programs might be appropriate at this time, the last question this paper addresses itself to are the implications of special training for teacher career prospects. Probably the greatest danger lies in an over emphasis upon special training for rural education to the exclusion of more general considerations which are professionally important to teachers in all areas. Both program organisers and the teachers themselves need to think of alternative uses of the specialist knowledge and skills which may have been acquired for work in a rural school. For example an examination of the concept of community education in the context of rural education provision should include an assessment of the transferability of ideas to an urban situation. Further, skills of self reliance thought desirable in a one- or two-teacher school may not be so useful in a larger (20+ teacher) institution. This difficulty of transferability of some teacher attitudes and skills in part accounts for the inclusion of an introduction to decision-making in schools for would-be teachers (supra pp. 171-2).

Secondly, teachers, administrators and teacher education institutions should bear in mind the induction model. At best we can only introduce teachers who are new to rural education, to some ideas and practices. If a teacher later decides that his career development will continue in this direction then the induction, coupled with subsequent experience, should be the basis for further specialist study. The problem arises, however, if the teacher decides that his professional development will be enhanced by work in an urban environment. He lacks the necessary experience. It may also become professionally desirable from the education officer's point of view that the teacher should change direction. What should be the nature of the in-service training under these circumstances? More significant perhaps are the promotional prospects for teachers. To concentrate on a speciality for too long may make promotion to headship difficult to obtain. This is where the regional teacher profile (supra pp. 172-3) could indicate what should be the next course of action, which may then culminate in a move into an urban teaching situation. One of the key decisions to be made here is: who is to assist with the conversion process? I come back to my initial comment that a varied network of provision can be helpful. The regional authority and the teacher education institutions working together or separately could devise programs using the different media: printed matter, radio programs and so on, which would provide professional training and support for the changing needs of the rural teacher throughout his career.

Conclusions

Pre-service teacher training for rural schools requires a 'balanced curriculum' which contains both special as well as general skills which will enable the teacher new to rural education to tackle his teaching tasks with confidence. Such pre-service can only be an induction, part of continuous professional development. It is then up to the teacher to decide upon his career pattern within the education service. He can

then specialise or not in the area of rural education within a coherent training framework whose provision for skills will be sufficiently varied to take account of both training and broader educational needs satisfactory for the attainment of an individual's goals, as well as that of the institution.

PART FIVE

The In-School Situation

Syllabus Design: Fitting an Urban Model to a Rural Need

JOHN NEWBY

Syllabus Design: Fitting an Urban Model to a Rural Need

In Western Australia, as in the other States of Australia, the curriculum of each school is influenced partly by the decisions of the principal and teachers, and partly by the syllabuses and guidelines prepared by the central office in the major city. The responsibility for developing the material put out by the central office belongs, in the case of primary schools, to the State Education Departments. In the case of secondary schools, this responsibility is shared with a board or with subject committees, which include members from outside the State Education Departments.

All Western Australian primary teachers are issued with each primary subject syllabus, whereas secondary teachers receive only the syllabus for the course they teach. These differences in responsibility and allocation are largely the result of a focus on the needs of urban schools and an urban population, and reflect an oversight of the needs of the students and teachers in the rural setting. Whatever the case, all these syllabuses—though they are not intended to be prescriptive—are drawn upon to a considerable extent by teachers searching for ideas and general assistance in making up their classroom program. Frequently, for example, the resources and learning activities used by teachers in their individual programs, have been selected from those suggested in the syllabuses.

Because, as indicated above, the centrally-produced syllabuses are significant instruments for facilitating teaching, it is very important that such syllabuses be constructed on sound theoretical principles. This introduces the question of theory, and the possibility of discrepancies that arise when theoretical assumptions are translated into practical instructional material that is suited primarily for the urban school.

The question of theory in syllabus construction is a vexed one, but the following principles appear to be widely accepted. Syllabus construction should provide for the differences that are found among students, teachers, subject matter, and milieu. It should be concerned with how children learn, which implies articulating and adopting a theory of learning which describes the stages of a child's mental, social, and emotional growth. It should suggest appropriate skills to be taught at each stage of intellectual development, together with content considered suited to the child's interests at that level. It should take into account the needs of teachers, which require that learning objectives are stated and that a structure of presentation is developed within which themes, topics, or units for study appear in a logical sequence. It should depict the progress expected of a typical student, and provide some suggestions for measuring that progress as an indicator of the success of the learning strategies the teacher has used.

The subject matter chosen to make up school syllabuses is largely based upon tradition. However, concern for relevance is recognized by the importance given to subjects which prepare learners for a position in adult society as citizens and workers. Generally, those subjects which offer students the opportunities to develop aesthetic, cultural and utilitarian qualities are supported. The final aspect for consideration in syllabus construction is the milieu. It determines the settings in which learning will take place and includes the institutions of family and community as well as school.

The relation of milieu to the principles of syllabus construction becomes apparent when it is considered that the primary and secondary curriculum materials (syllabuses, teachers' handbooks, student workbooks) that are prepared by the central office are issued to all schools, irrespective of size or location. A closer look at these materials will show that underneath the assumptions of learning theory that guide their design, lie certain practical assumptions about the way they will be used. These are:

1. children of similar age and level of intellectual development will be grouped within a single class;
2. teachers will devise their own organization of syllabus content to account for time allocated to subjects, individual student needs, and resources available
3. teachers will provide the learning activities for their students; and
4. most children will complete the syllabus content for their school year in one calendar year.

Should these assumptions be challenged? Can it be demonstrated that the syllabuses prepared at the central office and designed for an urban school system, are inappropriate in rural settings?

The content, skills and concepts of each syllabus are presented in grade-by-grade sequences providing a year's work for each student. The suggested learning experiences, the places to visit and study, the materials to collect for observation and discussion, all seem to relate to classrooms in an urban setting. Yet in 1979 more than half of the schools in Western Australia were located in rural areas and of these nearly sixty per cent are one or two teacher schools. It seems that, as for the whole of the country, 'no special effort has been made by the education authorities either to devise a program suitable for use in the small school or to suggest alteration to the supplied program'.[1]

Does this apparent bias in our centrally prepared syllabuses lead to differences in educational standards between urban and rural children? A recent OECD study presented the following as one of fifteen conclusions drawn from its SPA Project: 'Student achievement in rural schools does not appear to fall significantly below that of urban students'.[2]

[1] Cromarty, J. A. 'Organization, Programming and Timetabling in the Small School', *Armidale Teachers' College Bulletin*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1971, p. 17.

[2] OECD, *Basic Education and Teacher Support in Sparsely Populated Areas*, Paris, 20 Sept., 1978, p. 45.

This conclusion would not appear to describe the situation in Australia, where research findings suggest that educational outcomes in rural areas are less satisfactory than those in urban areas. Rural children have been shown to achieve at lower levels than urban children.[3] Cambourne, writing the introduction to his Queensland study says 'what research has been done suggests that rural children are environmentally under-privileged and hence educationally underdeveloped'.[4]

It appears that a problem does emerge, because the report on poverty and education says: 'in rural schools in most cases the content of schooling is not tailored to students' needs but simply replicates that of urban schools. Teachers accept the policy that general curricula, universally available, constitute the best basis for learning and preparation for the future'.[5]

The problem then appears to be one of relevance. Whether rural schools should be different and have more appropriate school programs devised for them depends on whether there is a distinctive rural culture.

If schooling is to reflect the life style of the local community then it may be the teacher's role to relate his programs to the needs and aspirations of that community.[6] Some assistance in adapting the universal syllabuses may be what is required rather than efforts to 'ruralize' the curriculum, which have tended towards an agricultural emphasis (an example of this 'ruralization' is the Area Rural Farm, established at Hagley Farm Primary School in Tasmania). The notion of adapting the universal syllabuses, and some of the problems it raises, are examined in the following paragraphs.

There are very considerable organizational problems facing the multigrade teacher who tries to use a syllabus designed for a large, single-grade classroom. Perhaps the most serious of these is keeping in step with the sequential development seemingly demanded by Piagetian-type learning theory which many curriculum developers draw upon when structuring the content and skills they believe need to be taught. There seems little chance of avoiding the problem by rejecting the theoretical postulates. Even if doubts can be raised about the exact nature and description of the stages of intellectual growth, common observation makes plain that children, in general, acquire the capacity to comprehend the world at increasing levels of sophistication as they grow older. The undeniable fact of intellectual maturation affects the classroom teacher in two broadly significant ways: in the choosing of subject matter, and in the presentation of subject matter. The problems for the multi-grade teacher is to achieve the 'best fit' in piecing together the various skills, concepts and methods of presentation appropriate for the ages and maturity levels of the children in the multi-grade class. The best that a teacher in these circumstances can do is plot a course which meets current notions of child development and

[3] Weston, R. 'Rural-urban differences in attainment: literature review', in *A Program for Research into Country, Education in Australia*. Hobart: Education Department of Tasmania, 1977, p. 23.

[4] Cambourne, B. L. *A Naturalistic Study of Language Performed with Grade 1 Rural and Urban School Schildren*. Townsville, Queensland: James Cook University of North Queensland, 1971.

[5] Fitzgerald, R. T. *Poverty and Education in Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976, p. 68.

[6] Bessant, Bob. 'Rural Schooling and Rural Myth in Australia', *Comparative Education*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (June), 1978, p. 129.

learning theory by selecting, modifying and adapting material which, even in the ideal situation for which it was designed, presents a challenge to informed teachers. Many teachers of single-grade classes must have been troubled by, for example, the difficulty of identifying and catering for stages of intellectual development and readiness among children of the same chronological age. How much more difficult the task of the multi-grade class teacher. One would agree with OECD that 'rural schools are remarkably able to implement new ideas, and serve as rather splendid laboratories for educational innovation'[7]—they have to!

It is doubtful that many teachers in such schools would appreciate the 'splendour' of their situation, or relish the 'laboratory' environment in which they find themselves. It is more likely that they would be preoccupied with classroom management and organization, and consider their pupils—at least to some extent—educationally disadvantaged.

An *Information Bulletin* published by the National Board of General Education in Finland (No. 3, 1978) described the efforts of the central authority to solve the problems of multi-grade organization of many rural schools in that country. The impression given is that these efforts have been persistent, tortuous, and harrowing—both for the authorities sponsoring experiments, and for the teachers putting them into practice. Of one experiement the report states: 'a combined grade 3-4 follows during the first year the curriculum of grade 3 and during the second year the curriculum of grade 4'.[8] This sits uncomfortably with the theory that stages of intellectual development are related to a child's level of conceptual understanding. In the words of the report 'Every other age-group of pupils studies matters in a wrong order'.[9] Senior Inspector Raijo Laukkanen draws attention to the problem in a paper entitled, 'Three Examples of Innovations in Combined-Class Instruction in Finland'. He asks: 'How is a pupil's learning motivation affected by the fact that he proceeds from fourth-class texts to material intended for third-class pupils, and then goes on to sixth-class texts and after that to material intended for the fifth class?'[10]

This research points up the difficulty of programming syllabus content for grouped classes in small rural schools. No system, rotation of themes, spiral curriculum, compartmentalization of subject matter or student body, has—to judge from these reports—removed this excessive burden from the teacher or the educational disadvantage from the student.

How does the experience of Finland compare with that of Western Australia? Clearly, the problems are very much the same, for in Western Australia similar conditions prevail: great or greater distances, small isolated pockets of population, small schools and multi-grade classes. As in the case of Finland, the degree and type of support that may be effectively supplied by the central authority remains an open question. It is certain that we require sensitive, well-organized, well supported and well-equipped teachers with ample hardware and software resources. It is seen that

[7] OECD, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

[8] Laukkanen, R. 'Development of Combined Grade Instruction in Finland', *Information Bulletin*, National Board of General Education, No. 3, 1978, p. 11.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] I am indebted to Senior Inspector Reijo Laukkanen for the use of this unpublished material.

the development of multi-grade instruction makes great demands, especially on the development of curriculum materials. The dual goal of better prepared teachers and better support material presents some problems but it introduces a direction for further action.

PART FIVE

The In-School Situation

A Parental Reaction to the Effectiveness of Current Government Strategies

RORY TREWEEKE

A Parental Reaction to the Effectiveness of Current Government Strategies

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) was conceived and born in 1971, during the depths of the rural depression. Because education costs had become too much to bear for many isolated families, governments, State and Federal, were turned to, for assistance.

The Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts report 'Education of Isolated School Children' (July 1976), identifies nine categories of isolated children and these were endorsed in August 1979 by the Queensland Parliamentary Select Committee (Ahern Committee on Education in Queensland (Fifth Interim Report)). I will not list these nine categories separately as they can all be encompassed within the definition originally thrashed out by ICPA—an isolated child is, 'One who for geographic reasons does not have reasonable daily access to an appropriate school.'

To put the views in this paper in proper perspective and context two basic premises that underpin ICPA's approach must be borne in mind:

1. Primary school-age children should remain in the home environment by either attending local primary schools (if available) or taking correspondence at home.
2. At secondary level we accept that generally children will have to live away from home to attend an appropriate school.

This arises from our recognition of the economic and physical unreality of attempting to provide full secondary facilities within reasonable daily access of all students.

I will now outline our reaction to government strategies, broadly under the headings of primary and secondary. But because the topics are wide ranging and include reference to such things as correspondence schools, rural primary schools, availability of diagnostic and remedial facilities, provision for talented and gifted children, transport to schools, Schools of the Air, satellites, curricula, Assistance for Isolated Children's Scheme (AIC), Disadvantaged Country Areas Program (DCAP), increasing fuel costs and even tertiary edcuation, overlap of topics is inevitable. My general approach will be an overview, but specific references to State or Commonwealth initiatives will be made where appropriate.

Primary education quite naturally divides into two aspects—correspondence which is associated with Schools of the Air (SOTA) and rural primary schools. Correspondence has undergone nothing short of a revolution in less than a decade. Curricula has been updated, presentation of material brightened and made more attractive, decentralisation of marking centres to bring teachers closer to pupils has taken place, flexibility of planning courses for individual needs markedly increased,

resource kits and audio-visual software and hardware generally included, courses for mother and/or governess supervisors instituted, mini-schools, camps and workshops for children are held on a regular basis and most importantly intinerant teachers reintroduced—under the auspcies of DCAP in Queensland and New South Wales and the Education Department in Western Australia. Pre-school correspondence is established in Queensland, getting under way in Western Australia and being trialed and evaluated in New South Wales. As one mother in New South Wales commented upon returning to the role of supervisor after an interval of seventeen years—'I could not believe the improvements in curricula, resources, services and assistance.'

Correspondence primary education in the literacy and numeracy sense, can be, depending upon parental motivation, as good as any other available form of education. However, mother/supervisor may dislike it for a variety of reasons—they feel inadequate, they become involved in personality clashes with their children due to the demands of trying to fulfil more than one role, they are too tied up with helping run properties, and so on. Hence, the pressure for bus runs, (up to 100-120 kilometres one way in some instances) on the pretext that their children are getting a 'better' education plus social contact—and yet at the same time harbouring a feeling of guilt about their inadequacy to cope. For those who do manage and enjoy it, it is a very rewarding experience.

Rural primary schools, particularly of the one and two teacher size (which represent 25 per cent of government primary schools throughout Australia) are obviously dependent for their success on the character and resourcefulness of the teacher or teachers involved. The ICPA's sympathies are with the young, generally inexperienced teachers who bear the main brunt of staffing these schools. Problems which are readily identified, but which vary from State to State, are: inadequate housing; inadequate preparation for the different life styles they will encounter; lack of professional contact and resource support; and lack of social and cultural outlets.

Small communities may act harmoniously in supporting a teacher, or may consist of divisive factions, each vying for the teacher's support and approval. A tricky situation for even a seasoned teacher. In the longer term, if they stay teaching in the bush because they like it, they inevitably face the same cost burden of other isolated people when their own children reach secondary age. I am not sure that we have any teachers as members of ICPA but I do know of teachers who receive AIC benefits.

Specific policies are needed in these areas to assist urban reared teachers to adjust to country ways so a rural appointment is not treated as condemnation to purgatory. Moves are under way in most States in this direction and I think it important that the emphasis should be positive—there should be incentive to go and identify with the positive aspects of rural life, rather than compensation for being 'put away' and serving a minimum sentence.

Schools of the Air offer the most valuable form of assistance yet devised for correspondence lessons. Their value is particularly enhanced when they act as marking centres for the leaflets which is the practice in Western Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory. They offer an otherwise missing social contact for the children, the concept of classroom work and discipline in learning to use the

transceiver. Mini-schools, supervisor seminars, activity camps and annual sports days all add to the enriching role they play. The link with itinerant teachers, well established in Western Australia and now being used in New South Wales and Queensland, is a further positive step. Operations are limited at present due to a lack of frequencies at some of the bigger schools (such as Broken Hill, Charleville and Cairns), lack of resource staff when they become marking centres and a lack of training for a unique teaching role—some people have a natural 'on-air' ability, others do not. Exposure on a daily basis to very keen mother/supervisors is also something of a shock to new SOTA teachers. Allowing them to develop courses suited to their pupils' needs is also most important. Broken Hill SOTA developed a new years five and six primary social studies course which has recently been adopted by Alice Springs and Katherine SOTAs—an incentive for teachers and a benefit for the children.

This is an appropriate time to mention Australia's proposed domestic satellite, the announcement of which was greeted with delight by ICPA as we have been vitally concerned in this area for some five years or more. The ultimate implications for education are probably hard to estimate, as its capability for delivering educational material at all levels is immense. Our priority for the first generation, due to be launched about the end of 1984, will be for the switching of all SOTA transmissions to be via the satellite, thereby upgrading reception and extending their range presently inhibited by the propagation problems inherent in the HF band now used. The extension of the service to include the use of 'hang-on' facilities such as slow-scan television, facsimile, telex, information retrieval systems such as Telidon, and possibly even full video, must be explored carefully and evaluated. Two-way audio interaction between teacher and child must be maintained as it is the essence of the SOTA system. On the evidence we have seen so far, passive delivery systems do not necessarily deliver the goods and we must not fall into the trap of equating gleaming electronic goodies with education *per se*.

It is with some trepidation that I venture some comments on curricula, as I am far from an expert in the field. But as a concerned outsider I feel there are some matters that need comment and certainly further examination. Firstly, there is the problem of the relevancy of material to bush kids. DCAP is doing great work in promoting locally produced material, particularly in the primary reader area. The only word of warning I would like to sound is to beware of reinforcing already existing insularities, because, and this is the second point I wish to make, in rural towns and isolated areas there is the difficulty of reconciling conflicting curricula demands for those who wish to enter the local, generally unskilled or semi-skilled, workforce, and those who wish to complete tertiary training and then return to their home area or else seek employment elsewhere. There should not be an assumption that all rural children wish to remain rural, in whatever capacity, just as there should not be an assumption that all urban children should remain urban. However, it is a fact that job opportunities are more limited in rural areas, unemployment is higher and rural children are made aware that there may be better chances of getting a job in the city. They need to be equipped for whichever their choice may be.

Turning now, in broad terms, to secondary education and Living Away from

Home Allowances (LAHA) under the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme (AIC), a misconception needs to be laid to rest. It is suggested that the AIC Scheme has been responsible for potential enrollees by-passing local schools. However, according to Commonwealth Education Department figures showing numbers of AIC recipients per postcode this is incorrect, with two possible exceptions—the Bourke and Broken Hill areas in New South Wales. For the rest of Australia the total per postcode (bearing in mind that they include those receiving assistance under all three headings: Correspondence, Second Home, and LAHA) would make not one whit of difference to staff or resources allocated to their nearest school should they attend there. They are too scattered, 86 per cent of recipients live further than forty kilometres from their nearest school (generally a primary school) and 46 per cent further than eighty kilometres. And if one is looking at the allocation of scarce resources the cost of alternatives to the AIC Scheme would be prohibitive. In New South Wales we have found bus runs where the cost per child per annum exceeds $2,500 just for transport. Well intentioned but to our way of thinking not sensible.

Our basic concern is to see that where living away from home is a necessity the residual extra cost to the parent is minimised. When LAHA was introduced in 1973, the basic allowance of $350 per annum represented about 60 per cent of average annual hostel fees, a satisfactory level of compensation for the extra expense involved in obtaining an education because of one's place of abode. Today hostel fees have risen by 30 per cent, the basic allowance of 43 per cent to $500 and the maximum available, including the means tested portions, to a senior secondary student is $1,550 per annum on a family adjusted income of $5,800 per annum. Some 40 per cent of AIC recipients have parents who are wage and salary earners, whose incomes preclude them from receiving assistance at this level so they, and low income rural producers, are caught. They find it almost impossible to bridge the gap between the basic allowance and the actual costs incurred for board. Hence the rise in secondary correspondence enrolments occurring in all States. We certainly do not wish to down-grade the role played by secondary correspondence—it has a very important role to play—and I have been most impressed by the Western Australian Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme—but we firmly believe that it should not be the only option available because of financial constraints. It should be one of the choices available, but clearly would not suit all students.

Some State governments do supplement the Federal AIC Scheme in the LAHA area—Queensland is most generous with remote area allowances and remote area scholarships at senior secondary level (both may be held concurrently), Western Australia assists with $150 per annum up to a certain level of receipt under AIC and AIC recipients in New South Wales will next year be eligible for $100 of that State's LAHA, increasing to the maximum by 1982. In South Australia the fulfilment of an election promise is awaited.

As to where children board when they live away from home it is interesting to note different emphases between the States, generally as the result of historical development. I merely illustrate this by the high and low for each category compared with the Australian average—figures from Australian Education Department (June 1978) based on AIC recipients only.

	High %		*Low* %		*Australia* %
Boarding schools	NSW	78	Tas	14	61
Hostels	Tas	66	NSW	8.3	23
Private board	SA	41	WA	9	16

One anomaly that has been raised is that whereby a land holder (grazier or farmer) can qualify for assistance under the means tested provisions of the AIC Scheme and yet his employee(s) may not. This arises because primary producers who use the tax averaging provisions in their business for calculating income tax may also use them for the AIC Scheme. I would like to return to this later.

One facet of government policy that has had, and continues to have, a bearing on rural producers' capacity to pay for such things as educational costs—is land settlement and development. And this impact is on top of normal boom and bust trade cycles for rural commodities and seasonal variations. Many people are not aware that virtually all of the arid and semi-arid lands in Australia are held under Crown leases of varying sorts. Settlement policies *were* to cut up expiring leases and settle the maximum number of producers upon minimum areas with consequent repercussions that are still evident today. The selling out and amalgamation of properties into bigger productive units is the most obvious—there are many who are still struggling but who will in time inevitably join the drift to urban or provincial town life.

The Disadvantaged Country Areas Program (DCAP) has proved to be a very positive catalyst of locally conceived schemes for enriching educational experiences and inviting community participation. Diversity of approach as between the States has been marked—some ideas have failed, some withered when an initiating teacher moved on, some parent and community members have felt overwhelmed by the 'experts'— but the overall impact has been beneficial and appreciated. The main obstacle left in attaining original goals is persuading State education departments to pick up the continued funding for initiatives that have been evaluated and proven. State governments without exception, are loath to do so, thus limiting expansion and trialing in new areas.

Much has been achieved in the area of providing diagnostic and remedial services to isolated children in the past few years. Chidley Point, Western Australia, is an example and in New South Wales a residential facility for children and parents will be established in Dubbo next year, using the already existing education and health services available in that regional centre. Problems still occur as to who should be a referring authority, particularly in relation to eligibility for AIC allowances for this purpose (the short-term boarding allowance). Follow-up to intensive programs is still not fully resolved and the difficulties in attracting mature-age guidance officers to live and serve in remote areas are even more pronounced than with classroom teachers.

Fuel, both the supply and the cost thereof, is going to play a big part in determining policy and action in years to come. Next year the bill for conveyance of students

paid by the New South Wales government will be $80 million—will the States continue to carry all, or the major portion, of the costs of transport? Individuals who transport children by private vehicle to school buses or schools are vitally affected. A typical case would be of a parent making a ten-mile one-way trip to meet a bus or direct to a school, which involves 8,000 miles per annum. Assuming fuel to be $1.30 per gallon and a car that does twenty miles per gallon, then the fuel bill alone is $520 per annum less any appropriate State subsidy. The Northern Territory provides the most realistic subsidy in this area, followed by New South Wales.

Provision of facilities for talented and gifted children are at present limited to music and the arts, although programs are starting to emerge under DCAP auspices for children who have talents in the field of mathematics, English and the sciences. Queensland has no special-talent schools and it is an area deserving of more attention.

Summary

The spotlight has been focused more closely and more has been done to alleviate the problems associated with rural education in the past decade, than in the previous five. There has been an increasing appreciation that education in rural areas must involve a dichotomy—educate for those who remain and educate for those who will leave. The need to resolve this issue is at the heart of the problem facing administrators providing the education system in the bush.

In the area of allowances it would seem that some rationalisation is called for. Because both State and Commonwealth governments are involved there are anomalies, and because assistance is available to both primary producers and wage and salary earners there are other anomalies. The way in which we would like to see this problem tackled is to assess the total costs involved (at all levels of education—primary, secondary and tertiary) to the family unit. It is the family economic unit that must bear the extra costs because of isolation which leads to great frustration, multiple form filling and work for accountants. We would also like to see the basis for assessment being disposable income after tax because this is, we feel, a fairer measure of the capacity of the family unit to meet the extra costs. Finally, means test levels need to be sharply lifted to bear some relationship to average earnings in the community at large.

PART FIVE

The In-School Situation

Aboriginal Learning Styles and the Three Rs

STEPHEN HARRIS

ED216825

Aboriginal Learning Styles[1] and the Three Rs

Although there are many volumes written about Aboriginal culture and knowledge, in all this writing very little is said about the particular ways in which this knowledge is learned by and transmitted by Aborigines. (Hamilton, 1970; Davidson, 1976; and Harris, 1977 are a few of the exceptions to this generalisation). Even those involved directly in Aboriginal education have been slow to understand the differences between the ways in which learning is undertaken in Aboriginal society and how most schoolroom teaching is done. If we bothered to understand Aboriginal ways better we could approach their schooling more efficiently and in a manner that helped them adapt more effectively to modern circumstances without loss of their Aboriginal identity. Apart from being very interesting in itself, to understand Aboriginal learning styles is important for two educational reasons: it allows a teacher to move from the known to the unknown in terms of both teaching content and teaching methods and it allows a teacher to more truly get to know Aboriginal students as individuals and to become accepted by them—thus creating a more motivating learning environment. In order to make any profitable classroom applications of knowledge about Aboriginal learning styles we must first genuinely accept the cultural difference of Aboriginal people. We must capitalise on the difference and not ignore it. As Watts (1976, p. 151) says:

> An orientation to cultural difference rather than to cultural deficit would define the school's task quite differently from that adopted in compensatory programs. It would require the school, courteously and realistically, to accept the minority child as he is, and his home and community as emotionally and cognitively significant to him. It would also require educators to understand how these children might learn most effectively and to devise strategies which would capitalise on their distinctive learning styles, their strengths and orientations.

RC 013 378

Some Anticipated Misunderstandings About the Scope of Aboriginal Learning Styles

The major contrast between Western school teaching and Aboriginal learning contexts is between formal and informal education. (See Appendix 1 for a chart listing the contrasts between formal and informal education). No claim is being made that there is no informal education in Western society. In fact there is an enormous amount of informal education because nearly all learning that takes place outside school is informal. Rather, the point is that informal education in Western society is

[1] The phrase 'learning styles' is a general term and should be taken to include other phrases such as 'learning contexts', 'learning methods, 'learning strategies' or 'ways' or 'modes' of learning.

frequently accompanied by verbal teaching or verbal explanation and that in Aboriginal society it is much more often non-verbal; and also, in Western society there is a great deal of both formal and informal education, whereas in more traditionally oriented Aboriginal society, most learning is done more or less informally.

While a great deal of social change has taken place in many Aboriginal groups (and I admit that I know very little about Aboriginal groups in Western Australia), from my observations in the Northern Territory and through discussions with many teachers the degree of social change is generally overestimated, that is Aboriginal people are still much more 'Aboriginal' in their attitudes and values and ordering of priorities than they are 'white'. I think this comes about because most white people only have dealings with Aboriginal people in the white man's social domain between 8.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. At Milingimbi, where my field work was done, I compared Lloyd Warner's 1927-1929 detailed account of yolngu[2] society (Warner, 1958) with what it seemed to be like in 1976 and (in spite of the adoption of, for example, outboard motors and the heavy use of the store)[3] the limited amount of change in aspects of social life such as kinship system, marriage system, use of language, religious system, child rearing practices, beliefs about the cause of illness was quite surprising.

While it is true that Milingimbi yolngu are very different from, say, those of Jigalong or Aurukun, I think it is safe to say that Aborigines at Milingimbi, Jigalong and Aurukun have more in common with each other and other Aboriginal groups in Australia than they do with any non-Aboriginal group. For example, I was interested to note that many of the observations made about groups in northern South Australia by O'Brien, Plooij and Whitelaw (1975) are quite similar to what I observed at Milingimbi. Furthermore, I believe this high degree of common ground across different traditionally oriented Aboriginal groups in Australia is as much a matter of a common level of technology and economic means of survival as it is a matter of culture. All societies develop educational methods which promote their efficient adaptation to technologies and economic survival needs. For example, persistence and repetition is an efficient approach to fishing but it is not an efficient way to fix a diesel engine. The methods Aboriginal people developed were very efficient for their economy.

What I will be describing below in the section on 'Aboriginal learning contexts' are observed Aboriginal behaviours and readers may ask whether these external behaviours have any correlation with thinking—or internal behaviour. There are many studies that show that there are correlations between environment/cultural behaviour and styles of cognition. (See Cole and Scribner, 1974 and Kearney and McElwain, 1976). In my Milingimbi study I replicated two of Alexander Luria's well known Russian tests. To give an example of just one sub-test, when Milingimbi mid-primary, upper-primary and post-primary students were shown four pictures of a

[2] 'Yolngu' is the term Milingimbi Aboriginal people use when referring to themselves. The observations recorded in this paper were made at Milingimbi.

[3] Although many Aboriginals today use cash to a great extent, and do much less hunting and gathering of food they do in fact often treat cash in a hunting and gathering way. This has come about since social service payments have been made available to Aborigines without them necessarily understanding the cause and effect origins of that supply of cash.

log of wood, a shovel, a saw and an axe, and were asked in Gupapuyngu which three 'went together', nearly all of these yolngu students said that the log, the saw and the axe went together, 'because you cut wood with an axe or a saw'. The rural white control group, living at a boarding school in Darwin, nearly all said that the saw, the axe and the shovel went together 'because they're tools', or 'because they're all metal'. These results showed that Milingimbi children are still more strongly influenced in the ways they think by their home environment than by their schooling experiences. They also support Cole and Scribner's important conclusion that people in different cultural groups develop different 'functional learning systems' in response to different survival needs. A more 'Aboriginal way' of thinking is apparently still more useful for survival for Milingimbi young people than is a Western or 'schooled' way of thinking.

This is not the place to discuss culturally different cognitive styles but from a teacher's point of view (whether behaviour or cognition is being discussed) the important thing is that the analysis continues through to classroom applications of the findings. Theories of learning are not enough; teachers need theories of teaching, and appropriate teaching[4] strategies.

Aboriginal Learning Contexts

SOME YOLNGU LEARNING STYLES

The following features of yolngu learning styles are important in terms of the learning atmosphere or settings they create.

Yolngu are, generally speaking, *present-time oriented*. This is related to their economy and technology; for example, they had no means of storing food over long periods and did not plant crops and herd animals—all of which would demand much future planning.

For yolngu people *authority*[5] is important. A pervasive trust in older people and authority figures exists and young people trust these older people to understand life's problems and provide solutions. The young are not encouraged to seek explanations for phenomena. These attitudes are consistent with a high degree of cultural *conservatism*. The young are expected to adopt the attitude that they will know in due course.

Yolngu children are expected to express a high level of *personal independence* and self-reliance. This is consistent with the lack of specialisation in yolngu economy. For example, although some yolngu people were better hunters and gatherers than others, all were expected to be able to sustain themselves under normal conditions.

[4] In Appendix 2 is a method suggested by Ramirez and Castaneda (1974) by which teachers of Spanish American Children might test themselves to see how far they are adapting their teaching strategies to suit their pupils culturally different cognitive styles. Teachers of Aboriginal children might be interested to 'test' themselves on this.

[5] Aboriginal conformity to authority appears to be contradictory to their personal independence. The apparent contradiction is solved if we think of conformity mainly operating in the realm of values, religious beliefs and the acceptance of 'given' explanations for phenomena. The personal independence operates mainly in the realm of personal physical movement.

This is also consistent with less authoritarian child-rearing practices. This personal independence prepares yolngu children to be experts in passive resistance.

The concept of knowing is connected to the *right to know*. Knowing is not merely an objective matter of how much a person actually knows. For example, when a thirty-five year old man who is junior in a clan actually knows by heart many songs, a more senior man in that clan might say of him 'Oh, he doesn't know anything', meaning really, 'He doesn't have the right to tell you about those songs, but I do'.

Yolngu people are more likely to express a *duality of thinking*—such as holding two mutually exclusive beliefs about the origin of an illness (sorcery and germs)—than Western people.

Yolngu people have a high degree of *perceptual curiosity*, or a strong interest in the familiar, as opposed to epistemic curiosity—which is the drive to know for the sake of knowing. Yolngu especially have an active visual interest in the local environment.

Closely related to curiosity is motivation, and yolngu tend to be more influenced by *intrinsic motivation* rather than extrinsic motivation; that is they learn because they want to rather than because people are pressuring them to or telling them that it's good for them.

Although yolngu are competitive in some contexts, they are generally *less competitive* than non-Aboriginal people. This too is connected with their economy, level of technology and present time orientation as well as to their values. In many of their own games yolngu children can be observed to be competing against themselves, or trying to improve their own performance, rather than trying to beat another person.

A very common yolngu problem-solving technique is *persistence and repetition*. This too is suitable to their traditional economy and technology. For example, the best way to ensure spearing a fish (for one who knows how to use a spear) is to keep throwing spears at fish until you get one.

The following are major features of yolngu learning which are more specifically learning styles or learning methods than are the above.

Much yolngu learning is by *observation and imitation*, rather than through verbal instruction, as is the case in classrooms. ('Verbal' here includes both oral instruction, answering questions, reading and writing). Virtually all survival skills, social skills and much learning of artistic skills such as painting and dancing are learned through observation and imitation. Yolngu people learn by *looking* more than through talk. (Aboriginal people are highly verbal, but talk has more of a social than a teaching function.)

Much yolngu learning is through *personal trial-and-error* rather than through a combination of verbal instruction and demonstration, as is the case in a school chemistry laboratory. Put another way, yolngu learn by doing, and this is efficient for their traditional technology.

Much yolngu learning is through *real-life-performance* rather than through practice in contrived settings. Even when yolngu people are 'practising' such as at a warm-up dance getting ready for a ceremony proper, or when they have football practice, they tend to turn these into events that are ends in themselves and not means to later ends.

Yolngu learning focuses on *context-specific skills* rather than on learning context-free principles, for example, a yolngu person learns to spear by spearing, not by first receiving a lot of instruction on theoretical principles of physics (force equals weight times speed) and geometry (missile trajectory) which might be usefully applied in many contexts, among which would be spearing.

Yolngu people tend to be more *person oriented* than information oriented. This is consistent with the lack in Aboriginal society of the institutionalised office of teacher. Who does the teaching is important, as well as what is taught.

In yolngu learning experiences there is much less sequencing of skills: rather, yolngu learn through *successive approximation to the efficient end product*. That is, there is more learning of wholes than of parts. For example, if a white school teacher were teaching dancing (or taking choir practice, or giving a woodwork lesson) the students would be combined into the whole activity. By contrast Aboriginal children from a very young age will join in and simply perform as much of the whole dance as they can, getting better over time through successive approximations to the mature end product. (See Harris 1977, pp. 130-313 for further details of these features of yolngu learning contexts.)

SOME RULES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

In order for a teacher to be able to utilise these Aboriginal learning styles effectively in the classroom they not only need to be able to assess where they can be applied effectively in terms of sound education practice, but they need to approach the children in such a way that communication takes place, that is, that cross-cultural 'static' is sufficiently cleared to allow messages to be understood. Several of the more important 'rules' of interpersonal communication are:

Yolngu people are given *the right to speak*, but reserve *the right not to listen*. The right to speak accounts for the length of time it can sometimes take for a yolngu group to reach consensus, and for the practice yolngu people sometimes have when they feel that they have been unjustly dealt with, of choosing a time when there is a 'captive audience' (such as just before the pictures start or at night when most people have settled down quietly) and loudly voicing a grievance. It also accounts for the social acceptability of various listeners talking among themselves or wandering off to get a drink or something, while listening to a speech. Thus audience 'restlessness' should not always be equated with rudeness.

There is an *absence of an impersonal debate form*. Yolngu people do not argue with open forcefulness about something unless they are really angry, and a strong verbal 'debate' from their point of view only occurs during an angry argument. Thus if two whites are in intense debate about something—and nowhere near coming to blows—any observing yolngu can become quite tense, presuming real anger is present and believing a physical conflict to be imminent.

Yolngu also like *to avoid 'strong talk' and 'speaking roughly'*. Strong talk is associated more with personal dislike and anger than it is with discipline. This is why if a teacher speaks harshly to a child for some misdemeanor the child has committed the child is quite likely to feel absolved from the crime because the teacher has just committed a more serious one by speaking roughly.

Yolngu also seek *to avoid direct verbal confrontation*. This socially accepted rule causes yolngu to use euphemisms or vagueness rather than a direct refusal. This is why an Aboriginal person may agree to do something later, without any intention of doing it, rather than to have to say a direct 'no'.

Yolngu *attitudes to the asking and answering of questions* is another of these rules of interpersonal communication, and there are several features of questioning behaviour that are important. General information questions such as 'What', 'Where', 'When', are acceptable if not in too great a volume but 'Why' questions are relatively infrequently asked. It is bad manners to be too inquisitive, and asking too many questions will be passively resisted. It is socially acceptable behaviour to ignore a question and to simply refuse to answer it if it doesn't suit the person to answer. (A white person always feels obliged to answer a question, even if by an evasion). Hypothetical questions—often used by whites to clarify an issue—are not asked by yolngu people and will frequently be misunderstood, with hypothetical being confused with the literal. Also, yolngu people do not use the question-and-answer technique as a teaching device. Thus they are surprised by being asked questions by school teachers when it is obvious the asker knows the answer. Many Aboriginal children never learn the rules of this strange school game and thus miss out on much of the information that the teachers are trying to communicate through it. (See Harris, 1977, pp. 333-446, for more details about yolngu sociolinguistic rules of interpersonal communication.)

Classroom Applications

A PLACE FOR ABORIGINAL CONTENT IN CLASSROOMS

In thinking about how far we can 'Aboriginalise' classroom activities to increase learning efficiency we can profitably think about what role Aboriginal *content* might have as well as the roles that Aboriginal teaching *methods* can have in classrooms. So I will diverge briefly from the main theme of Aboriginal learning styles to give just three reasons—educational reasons—why at least some Aboriginal content should be used in Aboriginal schools.

A good place to start is to establish the principle that Aboriginal people who come into classrooms are not empty vessels to be filled by Western knowledge. Certainly, Aborigines want to (and need to) learn certain aspects of Western knowledge but that does not mean they are 'empty'. The weakness actually lies with non-Aborigines who are ignorant of how much and what they know.

The next thing to keep in mind is that the *use of intelligence is dependent on perception* (see Kamii, 1975, p. 230). Many Aboriginal children sometimes fail in problem solving tasks in the classroom, not because they lack intelligence but because the problem is so foreign and strange (both in terms of content and motivation or interest) that the student cannot perceive what the problem really is. And, if children can not perceive what the problem really is, how can they bring their intelligence fully to bear on it?* We in the school are thus responsible for how intelligently

* This is not only a teaching problem, but one we should keep in mind when evaluating much of the psychological testing that has been done with Aboriginal children.

a child will act because we are responsible for the perceptions he is offered. For example, the chances are that if Aboriginal students were taught detailed accounts of local history both from the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal viewpoints (and taught by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people) and from there were taken in ever-increasing circles out to some of what the school syllabus includes as history, Aboriginal students would better perceive the purpose of learning history, and be much better able to apply their intelligence to it (and be more interested in it.)

Or to use another example, even though Aboriginal students may be able to 'read' every word in a passage, if they do not know the background to the passage they can hardly be expected to answer comprehension questions on it very well. Thus it is important that we use familiar content as much as possible with Aboriginal students, especially younger ones.

In some cases Aboriginal content can also be used as the vehicle for teaching Western educational processes. For example, local Aboriginal knowledge of natural science (where features of the familiar local environment are readily perceived and the familiar content itself is probably highly interesting) could be recorded and taught and the Aboriginal and Western systems contrasted, for example, Aboriginal classification of flora and fauna contrasted with Western classification). Then Western scientific thought could be more meaningfully taught and Aboriginal students more readily adapt to the schooling process and succeed more at it.[7] (See Davis, 1979.)

THE USE OF ABORIGINAL LEARNING PROCESSES OR METHODS IN THE CLASSROOM

The earlier description of various traditional Aboriginal learning contexts is a descriptive study and as such has value in sensitising teachers to the background of their Aboriginal students. The other value of these Aboriginal learning methods should be to influence teaching methodology in the classroom. These applications must be made on the basis of whether each methodology is sound for the instructional purpose.

Some of these features of Aboriginal learning do not appear to have productive applications in modern classrooms. For example:

Aboriginal *present-time orientation* on face value is not likely to be very helpful in the Aboriginal classroom. (Much of the motivation that white children have for school learning—given by parents and teachers—is an awareness of the importance of success at school for later employment.) Yet teachers of Aboriginal children should take account of Aboriginal present-time orientation and seek to motivate from other directions, such as the present intrinsic interest of the activity or im-

[7] In his work with yolngu post-primary students at Milingimbi Davis kept in mind five levels of student performance as follows (from Taba, 1962, p. 326): (i) imitating, duplicating, repeating; (ii) recognising, identifying, remembering, recalling, classifying; (iii) comparing, relating, discriminating, reformulating, illustrating; (iv) explaining, justifying, predicting, estimating, interpreting, making critical judgements, drawing inferences; and (v) creating, discovering, reorganising, formulating new hypotheses, new questions and problems. He said (personal communication) that the yolngu students seemed to operate from level (i) to somewhere in levels (iii) and (iv). He hopes in further work to see how environmental studies can be a means of stimulating yolngu students to operate in all five levels.

mediate satisfaction of a job well done. For example, learning-to-read activities need to be immediately satisfying to hold interest in reading.

To this end, various flash-card games—enjoyable in themselves—are useful, and the Language Experience approach, Instant Readers (from the Price-Mulburn idea) and the Breakthrough to Literacy approach seem to be helpful. One of the values of such approaches is that they give learners the impression that they are doing a good deal of reading already—and do not postpone the time 'the real thing' can be experienced.

Traditional Aboriginal young people's cultural conservatism and *trust of the older people* and authority figures to 'answer' life's difficult questions for them, is also not productive in academic terms in schools, because a good deal of school teaching promotes the development of a so-called enquiring rational mind, and the idea that children should 'think for themselves'. This aspect of yolngu learning or socialisation clashes head on with school learning and there seems to be no easy compromise between the two systems. One partial solution is to promote the teacher training of Aboriginal teachers and include studies of the dilemmas of social change in that training so that local Aboriginal teachers can make the major decisions about such compromises.

The high degree of *personal independence* expressed by yolngu children also does not help them to cope with some of the classroom behaviours expected of them by non-Aboriginal teachers. Yet Aboriginal children's independence is a behaviour that teachers need to understand, otherwise they will assume that student slowness to obey orders is 'disobedience' when really it is more an expression of personal independence which is culturally acceptable from the Aboriginal viewpoint.

Persistence and repetition as a problem solving device is a feature of Aboriginal learning which is useful. For example, it does not promote the learning of mathematics, or learning the varied applications of mathematical principles, but it can be usefully harnessed in learning to read.

I will not list and comment on all features of yolngu learning styles again; but I will discuss two more which are perhaps the most important.

In traditional Aboriginal learning contexts learners engage in *mastering context-specific skills*, rather than on learning context-free principles which can be applied in any new setting. It has been said that 'To be able to apply what one has learnt is the hallmark of an educated person'. This is a particularly important matter because through this tendency to learn context-specific skills many Aboriginal students have learned to read in classrooms without really absorbing the idea that reading is a tool that can be usefully applied in many situations outside the classroom. The same is true for mathematics. For example, recently four yolngu teaching assistants shared a meal in a restaurant with two white teachers. The bill for the four yolngu (whom the waiter grouped together) came to $27.00. When one of the white teachers asked the yolngu how much each that was, only one of them could work it out and then after a relatively lengthy time. All four of those yolngu could have divided twenty-seven by four on paper very easily, but they had learned little of transferring these skills to any new context. Thus we teach many Aborigines unusable knowledge when we allow that knowledge to be associated only with the specific context of the class-

room. (Perhaps two ways to ensure that context-free principles are learned would be to get students to apply the same skills in as many different contexts as possible, and to get them to verbalise the steps for each operation, thus raising the level of awareness about the skills.

Learning by *observation and imitation* rather than through *verbal instruction* can be very effective in some school subject areas (such as learning to read and learning oral English as discussed (infra pp. 200-2)) but there is no way that becoming familiar with learning through verbal instruction can be avoided if an Aboriginal child is to do well at school. Not only is learning to learn through talking important because of practical considerations (that is, it is the only way most white teachers know how to teach) but for two sound educational considerations:

1. To learn from the teacher's verbal *question-and-answer technique* (so different from Aboriginal story-telling technique) facilitates over-learning and raises the level of consciousness and clarity that the student has about the topic being learned. This especially happens when the student verbalises back to the teacher.
2. When the material to be learned moves away from what can be experienced in the here and now the only means by which it can be taught is through verbal means, including talking or reading. The whole *process of reading* cannot be avoided in classroom teaching. Becoming literate helps Aboriginal children to move beyond 'egocentric thought'. (See Cummins, 1979, p. 231.) When students move beyond ego-centred thought they become readily able to see things from another person's perspective and are no longer more or less anchored in the immediate world and unable to hypothesise about various alternative perspectives. These thought processes are necessary for coping with Western society and the school education system.

The question-and-answer technique is so basic to learning through verbal means in classrooms and so foreign to most Aboriginal children, that some extra discussion will be devoted to it here. This is a Western school behaviour which seriously confuses Aboriginal children because in their society they are not expected to answer questions for which the asker knows the answers. For white teachers who, by the time they become qualified teachers, have themselves been involved in this school game for over fifteen years, it is hard to conceive how strange the question-and-answer game is to Aboriginal children. As Berieter (1965) points out, there are certain special ground rules to the question-and-answer game which white teachers take for granted. Berieter says, 'This game has been the mainstay of meaningful teaching since the days of Socrates. It is the basic educational game, and until children have learned to play it their teacher can be little more than a high quality nursemaid' (pp. 73-74). The three rules to this game which must be understood are:

1. although the teacher knows the answer to the question, she seriously wants the information to be given back by the student;
2. although the situation posed by the question is imaginary, real-life rules apply to the discussion;

3. although the teacher is free to ask any question she chooses, she is not free to accept any answer! Though able to invent any question—the teacher is not able to invent the answers, but is bound by rules that would apply in the real-life situation imagined in the game.

Basic though this seems to us the Aboriginal child (especially those learning in a language other than their first language) who does not understand these rules could be exercising very sound logic in failing to use the rules. For example, the child could well think: 'The teacher is playing a game of pretend—when she pretends we will pretend', or 'When the teacher plays this game the behaviour is purely arbitrary so we can only guess—who knows, we may be lucky', or 'The best thing we can do is watch the teacher's face to get a clue to what she wants'. (This is to be expected from Aboriginal person-orientation) or, 'Perhaps the best answer is the one that was right last time'. In the early childhood years the use of Aboriginal learning methods and the child's own language would largely avoid these potential problems, but by mid-primary, the students need to know the rules of this school game. If teachers are aware of the problems, the kind of hypothetical thinking involved in the question-and-answer game can be carefully presented to and fully controlled by the children.

So far I have gone into some detail in pointing out some of the ways in which Aboriginal learning contexts or expectations about learning cannot be applied in classrooms[8] without full awareness of their educational implications. But there are very important ways in which Aboriginal learning styles can be applied in the classroom—ways that are educationally sound in terms of Western educational theory. In order to illustrate the positive use of several Aboriginal learning styles I will discuss them in the context of learning to read, learning oral English, and learning to write.

LEARNING TO READ

Reading is one of the three R's which I believe can be taught effectively in a way that is both theoretically sound from a Western viewpoint, and suitable to Aboriginal expectations about learning. From the point of view of Western theory there has been a shifting of emphasis during the last fifteen years away from the idea that reading is best taught as a decoding skill, to teaching it more in terms of a much broader communication skill. One of the more out-of-date ways to approach the teaching of reading is to emphasise the language of letters first, then words, then comprehension skills, then later to expose the learner to lots of easy reading practice. More recently, the tendency is to reverse this emphasis; to expose the child to

[8] It is quite possible that non-Aboriginal teachers will be able to adapt to the suggestions in this section more readily than Aboriginal staff. Aboriginal staff, tending to be conservative and to expect to teach as they were taught in school, tend to become uneasy when innovative classroom programs are introduced. (This is one reason why 'open classrooms', for example, have not become common in Northern Territory Aboriginal schools). Because Aboriginal learning styles are largely informal, Aborigines are not very conscious of them and do not find it easy to discuss them and analyse them. Thus non-Aboriginal teachers need to spend time initiating discussions—preferably with groups of Aboriginal staff—about how Aborigines teach and learn and about how these insights might be applied in classrooms.

lots of reading first and foremost (which is done by reading a great deal *to* and *with* children, and through such methods as the language experience approach), and only then to teach smaller parts in a formal way. The theory is that although children do need to be taught word-attack skills, it is important to realise that children learn to read by reading. Several methodologies such as the 'lap method' (teaching reading basically as parents in 'reading homes' teach their children), Language Experience, Caption Books and Instant Readers (a series of pictures with sentences underneath which progress with minimal changes) are approaches which involve the major aspects of Aboriginal learning methods: learning by *observation*, by *doing*, by *imitation*, by *personal trial and error*, by *real-life* performance, by *persistence and repetitions* as well as utilising *person orientation* and the principle of learning through *successive approximations to the efficient end product*[9] (which is a different approach from the careful sequencing of skills, that is, where cumulative skills are taught in such a way that the ultimate usefulness of each skill is not obvious at the time of teaching).

LEARNING TO SPEAK ENGLISH

There are TESL methodologies available today which emphasise the importance of dialogue, role playing, mime and simulation of real-life situations, and which use group activity as a means of learning a social competence in English as well as a linguistic competence.

A report (personal communication, Sue Harris, 1978) of the use of one such approach at Milingimbi with yolngu adults reveals a productive incorporation of a number of features of Aboriginal learning methods.

This program placed yolngu in simulated settings where they could learn the types of dialogues necessary to get by in white society. Through the repeated use of films of dialogues and tape recorded conversations students were able to observe or hear real verbal *approximations to the efficient end products* (through mime and continuous attempts at role playing the dialogues) and to gain confidence in speaking some practical English. The learning circumstances were highly social. Students spent most of their time trying to talk to other students (using phrases and sentences from the film they had just seen), learning *by experience*, and by constantly trying in a non-testing, non-embarrasing context. Failure was not possible because a student was able to mime out the dialogue when the words wouldn't come. Students also had some choice of exactly when and how they responded, that is, each person had a degree of personal independence—although the individual was actually carried along in a group surge of activity. I ascribe the response of the Aboriginal adults in this program to high initial motivation, very skilled teaching, and to the many Abo-

[9] Connected with this practice is another feature of Aboriginal teaching behaviour. Aboriginal teachers often provide the answer for the children, rather than letting them struggle with decoding the word. Although white teachers seem to believe that such a struggle is a profitable educational experience, it has also been pointed out by writers such as Frank Smith (1971) that if the child is told the word by a teacher who is reading along with the children the chances of the child keeping the meaning of the whole sentence or passage in mind is increased, and in turn the chances of syntax and semantics coming to the child's aid in understanding the passage are also increased.

riginal features and learning processes in this learning activity: there was a group and clan loyalty, that is *person orientation*; the sessions were enjoyable, that is, *ends in themselves* and not perceived merely as dull practice sessions for later ends; there was no clear spectator-actor distinction (parallel to Aboriginal dance situations); and there was much *observation, repetition, imitation, learning-by-doing, personal trial-and-error*; all in a non-threatening context. There was no formal testing in the body of the program, and Aboriginal facilities for and love of *drama* was used to the full. There was no *direct questioning*, no threat to Aboriginal felt rights to *independent* action, no embarrassment of individuals in front of groups and no lengthy verbal instruction. The yongu tendency to learn *context-specific* skills was even appropriate on occasion because many English conversation forms are stock phrases used only in the specific context of meeting people.

WRITING (OR PENMANSHIP)

It is not difficult to see how observation, repetition, imitation, learning-by-doing, personal-trial-and-error, and successive approximations to the efficient end product are effective ways to learn to write. In learning this skill these 'Aboriginal' ways of learning are probably universally practised in schools already.

Conclusion

Analysing the potential value of Aboriginal learning methods provides productive insights into how the school education of traditionally oriented Aboriginal children might be made more successful. However, the question remains, what teachers are adequately trained or have a desire to adapt current school practice to such insights? Unless teachers are sufficiently sensitised to differences in Aboriginal school children and receive specialised training to help them adapt teaching methodology accordingly, then practical use of such knowledge of Aboriginal learning methods will be limited. And even if Departments of Education would go to the extra expense of providing this specialist training coinciding with such a measure would have to be the provision of incentives to keep specially trained teachers in Aboriginal schools for at least, say, three years. The other way to recognise in practice that Aboriginal children have special education needs because of cultural differences, would be to put new effort—both within schools and in training colleges—into the professional development of Aboriginal teachers, so that not only do they develop the 'how' of orthodox Western classroom teaching practice but develop a capacity to verbalise *why* they see certain classroom methods as effective and why others are not. In this way we can make the schooling of Aboriginal children more effective, and improve the school as a place where Aboriginal identity, rather than being lost, is maintained—even if in a modernising form.

Appendix 1

FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING CONTRASTED

Most non-Aboriginal learning in Australia is *FORMAL*, i.e. conducted as follows:	Most Aboriginal learning is *INFORMAL*, i.e. conducted as follows:
• in specifically educational institutions and buildings	• without specifically arranged educational institutions or buildings
• by trained teachers who have a specific office of teacher	• by various relatives
• with the content having little immediate application to everyday life and survival	• with the content having immediate relevance to, and arising out of, everyday life and survival
• largely through verbal instruction. (While there is much informal learning in Western society—such as in the home—this is still accompanied by much more verbal teaching than is the case in Aboriginal society.)	• largely through non-verbal means
• is often imparted in compact highly organised 'courses' which take comparatively little time	• in most cases is time consuming with most skills being learned over many years
• learning is often a highly conscious process	• learning is often not a highly conscious process.*

* This probably accounts for why I was unable to gather my information at Milingimbi through interviews. Although the Milingimbi people obviously have a highly developed education system, it is not something they can readily define or explain or discuss.

Appendix 2

FIELD-INDEPENDENT TEACHING STRATEGIES OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

Indicate the frequency with which each teaching behavior occurs by placing a check in the appropriate column.

Teacher's Name	Grade	School	Date
Overall Teaching Situation	Self-evaluation Observer's Name		

Teacher's intended teaching style (if applicable)

FIELD-INDEPENDENT TEACHING BEHAVIORS	FREQUENCY				
	NOT TRUE	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE	OFTEN TRUE	ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE
PERSONAL BEHAVIORS					
1 Maintains formal relationships with students			X		
2 Centers attention on instructional objectives gives social atmosphere secondary importance		X			
INSTRUCTIONAL BEHAVIORS					
1 Encourages independent student achievement				X	
2 Encourages competition between students			X		
3 Adopts a consusltant role		X			
4 Encourages trial and error learning		X			
5 Encourages task orientation			X		
CURRICULUM RELATED BEHAVIORS					
1 Focuses on details of curriculum materials				X	
2 Focuses on facts and principles, encourages using novel approaches to problem solving				X	
3 Relies on graphs, charts and forumulas		X			
4 Emphasizes inductive learning and discovery approach				X	

Source: Ramirez and Castaneda (1974, pp. 177-178).

FIELD-SENSITIVE TEACHING BEHAVIORS	FREQUENCY				
	NOT TRUE	SELDOM TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE	OFTEN TRUE	ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE
PERSONAL BEHAVIORS					
1 Displays physical and verbal expressions of approval and warmth					X
2 Uses personalized rewards which strengthen the relationship with students				X	
INSTRUCTIONAL BEHAVIORS					
1 Expresses confidence in child's ability to succeed				X	
2 Gives guidance to students; makes purpose and main principles of lesson obvious to students			X		
3 Encourages learning through modeling; asks children to imitate		X			
4 Encourages cooperation and development of group feeling				X	
5 Holds internal class discussions relating concepts to students' experiences			X		
CURRICULUM RELATED BEHAVIORS					
1 Emphasizes global aspects of concepts; clearly explains performance objectives	X				
2 Personalizes curriculum				X	
3 Humanizes curriculum				X	
4 Uses teaching material to elicit expression of feelings from students				X	

NOTE: Field sensitivity (or dependence) versus field independence is one measure of culturally/environmentally influenced cognitive (or perceptual) difference. Spanish, Eskimo and Australian Aboriginal children tend towards being field-sensitive, and 'white' Australian children would tend to be field-independent. A field-sensitive child in this context of classroom learning strategies is a person who is aware of all the people in the environment—their attitudes, behaviour, tone of voice, facial expression, cooperation with other students and so on—where information is mediated through a total learning environment. The field-independent child focuses in a fairly formal way on the formation the teacher is imparting rather than on the teacher as a person or on other affective dimensions in the classroom.

Teachers of Aboriginal children could rate themselves on these items as a rough means of checking to see whether they have made any changes in teaching strategies since being in an Aboriginal classroom.

These charts are reproduced here to indicate the kind of thought we should be giving to this matter under the headings 'Personal Behaviour' (that is, teacher's behaviour), 'Instructional Behaviours' and 'Curriculum-Related Behaviours'. We should, however, eventually be able to be much more specific and detailed under these headings in regard to Aboriginal children than what Ramirez and Castaneda were able to be about Spanish children in 1974.

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PART FIVE

The In-School Situation

Coordination and Utilization of Services in Special Education

BRIAN RICHARDSON

Coordination and Utilization of Services in Special Education

This paper deals with the problems of coordinating and utilizing the services that either are available now, or could be made available within the constraints of current administrative and fiscal policy.

The problem of providing appropriate special education services is always a difficult task for educational administrators. Even with a heavy concentration of population and unlimited finance, there are philosophical arguments which affect the provision of services. The additional geographic and demographic factors of vast areas with scattered population make the problem an even more acute one in a State like Western Australia.

In Western Australia, the move towards decentralisation has brought about the formation of nine country educational regions. While these regions control many facets of the provision of education within their own areas, the regional superintendents have but limited control over staffing matters. Most of these country regions have resource centres and many of them have an advisory teacher on their staff. From the point of view of exceptional children, all too few of the advisory staff have either the experience or qualifications for working with children with special needs. It must also be pointed out that in at least four of the regions, the distances involved in moving from the regional offices to outlying schools are so great that annual contact is sometimes possible, but more frequent contact highly improbable. In summary then, the role of the regional resource centres and advisory staffs are often quite limited as far as handicapped children are concerned.

Apart from the help provided by the regionally-based advisory staff, other means by which the State Education Department provides services to rural children with special needs are:

Special classes for the intellectually handicapped. There are nineteen of these at the primary level and four at the secondary level.

Special schools for the intellectually handicapped. Eleven of these are in country areas. In most cases the severity of the intellectual handicap is the main determinent of whether a child is placed in a special class or special school.

Learning assistance teachers (LATS). These are experienced teachers who have received some additional in-service training designed to acquaint them with some of the elements of diagnostic-prescriptive teaching. They are intended to act as support staff within their own schools, but all too frequently they have very limited time to

do anything other than teach a normal class. In addition, the number of learning assistance teachers in country areas is low compared to the needs of country children.

Guidance officers. For many years, the more isolated areas of Western Australia have not had an adequate provision of guidance services. Consequently large areas of the State have been served (and I use that term with some misgivings) on an itinerant basis. It must be pointed out that often these itinerant services are supplied on the basis of the availability of a guidance officer to go to the country, rather than the guidance officer having the particular expertise necessary to make the exercise a profitable one for all concerned.

Itinerant teachers of the hearing impaired. Some help is provided to hearing impaired children and their teachers by an itinerant service.

Mobile support unit. One special education teacher provides a mobile support service to those schools which receive funding through the Disadvantaged Country Area Program. This teacher's role involves assessment, programming and referring children to other agencies.

Western Australian Correspondence School Remedial Section. One staff member of the Correspondence School is responsible for monitoring the programs of children who are considered to be in need of remedial help.

Itinerant teachers from schools of the air. There are five Schools of the Air covering the Western Australian outback. Itinerant teachers based on each of the Schools of the Air visit children on outlying stations. Unfortunately, these teachers have neither experience nor qualifications in any area of special education, thus they have a limited role in the education of isolated children with special needs.

Chidley Educational Centre. This residential centre opened in 1976, caters for rural children aged six to thirteen who are having learning difficulties. Chidley accommodates forty children who stay for a maximum period of six months. Roughly 60 per cent of the Chidley intake are of average intelligence, 25 per cent low average intelligence or below and 15 per cent high average intelligence or above.

As well as these facets of Education Department provision for the isolated child with special needs, a number of other agencies may be involved. The Intellectually Handicapped Division of Mental Health Services, School Health Services and Department of Community Welfare are but three other groups which may be providing services. There is a quite remarkable lack of coordination between the various services. This results in duplication of services, inadequate services, and disillusionment at the local level—all of which work to the detriment of the child with special needs. In such a situation a claim of accountability suffers somewhat in credibility.

A Plan for Coordination.

One of the drawbacks of the current provision for isolated children with special needs is that the facets identified in the previous section come under the control of two different administrative directorates and a considerable number of superintendents. Effective utilization of the available resources is impossible unless there is a mechanism by which the services can be coordinated.

There are approximately 330 teaching and administrative staff involved in special education in Western Australia. The administrative oversight of this staff is a shared responsibility between the regional director or superintendent and the superintendent of special education. With a developing trend away from segregated facilities for children with special needs, it is evident that an increasing number of these children will receive special help within their own school. In the eyes of many people this trend is to be commended from both the educational and the social standpoint. For demographic reasons also it would seem to have a lot to commend it to educational administrators concerned with providing for rural children in Western Australia.

However, if a child who has special needs remains in a regular classroom how can we be certain that he is receiving an appropriate education? As professional as they are, I have no doubt that many primary superintendents are ill-equipped to advise teachers of handicapped children. I have no doubt that these same superintendents would welcome more professional help in this area.

In view of the current emphasis on the needs of the rural child, the trend, noted above, towards more children with special needs remaining in the regular classroom, and the current lack of adequate coordination and utilization of available resources, it would seem to be an appropriate time to propose that a second superintendent of special education be appointed in this State. It is suggested here that such a person be responsible with the regional directors and superintendents, for the education of the rural child with special needs.

Of the 674 government schools in Western Australia 348 or 52 per cent are country schools. While many more children are educated in the 326 metropolitan schools, it would not be difficult to claim that some children in the country schools are often not receiving the most appropriate education. Out of the 330 teaching and administrative staff in special education, only sixty-two are working in country areas. The professional oversight of these staff, the coordination of services provided by other branches of the Education Department and other government agencies, and the effective utilization of the available resources, are but three tasks which could be the responsibility of a second superintendent of special education. When it is noted that country schools have a high proportion of younger, inexperienced teachers, than do metropolitan schools, it can be seen that a staff development role could be an important aspect of such a person's work.

The rural child with special needs deserves equal access, with his metropolitan peer, to an appropriate education. If we can provide an education through the coordination and utilization of available resources, we can go a long way towards ensuring that equal access.

PART FIVE

The In-School Situation

Early Identification and Educational Services for Young Handicapped Children in Rural Areas

AUDREY LITTLE

Early Identification and Educational Services for Young Handicapped Children in Rural Areas

Diagnosis of handicapping conditions is generally regarded as the responsibility of the medical profession. Identifying the child who needs referring for medical investigation depends on the observations, experience and knowledge of a wider range of people who have contact with the child—the parents, other family members, the community and child health nurses, welfare officers, preschool and other teachers, guidance officers and therapists. Once the diagnosis is made many of these people are, or should be, involved in assessing the child's needs and problems associated with providing for those needs with the least possible disturbance to the child and his family. In the city many options are available and if one strategy proves unsuitable or unacceptable for any reason an alternative plan can usually be worked out but for children living in the country alternatives are limited and very often decisions have to be made on considerations other than what would be deemed the most desirable provisions for the child. Generally efforts are made to cater for the child's needs in his own home but if that home is far from a centre where specialized treatment, training and educational facilities are available alternative strategies for delivering needed service to the child must be applied.

Servicing Handicapped Children in Rural Areas—Problems and Suggestions for Helping to Solve them

MEDICAL SERVICES

The community and child health services, the doctors and hospital staffs are key people working with exceptional children in rural areas. While many who are severely handicapped are referred to the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children in Perth for invesitgation and treatment the policy is to return the children to their families as soon as possible, leaving the responsibility for supervising on going treatment to local medical services. Unfortunately many children must be sent to Perth by air accompanied by hospital personnel rather than their parents. Many children, particularly Aboriginal children, find the aircraft journey and the hospital wards very frightening and assessments of general and special abilities and problems made in the hospital may not give a reliable picture of the child's capabilities. Also decisions made in Perth cannot fully appreciate the capacity of the family, the community and the available service organizations to fulfil the needs of the child. People living in the area may not have the specialized expertise but will have access to the

family—often the extended family—and be better able to assess the effects of isolation from other people, involvement of the family in community groups, demands on the mother's time by other members of the family and outside work activities. Involving local community health sisters in providing supervision of medical and non-medical treatment, and informal friendly support with frequent contacts may be more valuable to a mother in a country town than therapy sessions once a month provided by a visiting 'expert', or necessitating a regular visit to a distant clinic. Of course professional diagnostic and treatment services should be available to all children who need them but the practicalities of providing such services to our widely scattered population prohibit the intensive programs that many specialists deem necessary. While one would not expect local community health and hospital staff to provide the full physiotherapy program available in city clinics given guidance and support from therapists visiting regularly three or four times a year much could be done for the child in its own home. Similarly, occupation and speech therapy programs could be supervised by local people—not necessarily health personnel—but part-time or voluntary people with some previous experience or people given suitable training. Undoubtedly such a scheme, which already operates informally in some country towns, would add to the work load of community and child health workers. Some additional staff would probably be needed, and possibly in-service training, but the already existing services have the organization to provide the needed help, and the status in the community stemming from years of service through Infant and Child Health Clinics which parents have learned to respect and trust.[1]

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Although research results have been variable most experts working with handicapped children stress the importance of compensatory training or 'early intervention' programs. Programs may vary widely in theoretical orientation, content and intensity but almost all utilize the services of the parents—usually the mother or a mother-substitute to teach the child new skills using techniques based largely on behaviour modification and precision teaching techniques. Programs are usually tailored to fit the needs of the child and build upon the skills he has already achieved. Individual sessions with adult-child interaction following prepared sequences leading to pre-determined goals. In city and larger country towns it is possible to provide both centre-based and home-based programs using trained staff who participate in the program and supervise the parent-trainer, but for isolated families the mother may have to carry out the program without support, feedback or adequate instruction. As such a mother may also be teaching others of her children by correspondence besides running the house and cooking for busy men and extra

[1] Informal support and assistance by Child Health sisters have proved invaluable in several of my clinical cases in outlying rural areas. Three blind preschoolers and several intellectually handicapped children and their families have in this way managed very well with only occasional visits to the city clinics. The sisters make regular reports and discuss problems either by letter or phone. However more formal arrangements made through the Division for the Intellectually Handicapped have been less successful possibly because of the number of DIH 'team' members involved.

demands of administering an 'early intervention program' may be impractical and unrealistic. Yet such programs are often recommended for handicapped children—particularly for retarded infants and toddlers. There is need for full assessment of the home situation by the agency team and a realistic appraisal of the potential progress of the child in the program before involving the mother in time-consuming sequences. Most mothers will try anything to help the handicapped baby and would feel guilty if unable to fulfil the requirements of the program whatever the stress on themselves but when the stress spills over to affect other members of the family the mother's guilt feelings multiply. If the handicapped child fails to show significant gains the mother's guilt may generate feelings of rejection to the child—his acceptance becomes conditional on his fulfilling expectations for improvement.

Where therapy, treatment or training programs are deemed essential some other provision may have to be made. Some country hospitals have provided physiotherapy on an outpatient or repeated short-stay basis. In other cases Princess Margaret Hospital, Lady Lawley Cottage (Red Cross), hostels run by the Division for the Intellectually Handicapped and the Sir James Mitchell Spastic Centre will take country children for short periods in order that intensive therapy and medical treatment can be carried out. While it is undoubtedly preferable that children remain in their own homes if at all possible, where this is impractical and unrealistic alternative arrangements can be in the best interests of the family as a whole. Bearing in mind that most of the handicapped preschoolers concerned are not able to communicate in any way with their families once they move out of the home, breaks away for treatment should be restricted to the minimum. So often 'short stay' residence becomes 'long stay' and eventually permanent placement with the family unable or unwilling to resume responsibility for the child on the grounds that the child is 'better off' in hostel or institution care.

PRESCHOOL SERVICES

Preschool education for handicapped children in country areas has traditionally been available through a special referral wherever a preschool teacher has the available place suitable conditions and sufficient help to cope with extra demands made by the 'special case' child. Indeed many preschool teachers, with little specialized experience or training have provided invaluable help to many handicapped children and their families. Although referrals are checked by advisory staff whenever possible many children enter kindergartens without a full investigation of the child's problems, needs and abilities and teachers have found themselves responsible for severely retarded, epileptic or spastic children who require a great deal of physical care. Such children are unlikely to cope with the regular program planned for 'normal' four and five year olds and will need an individual program, the basis of which is training in basic social and self-care skills. Many teachers have coped with this situation, often regarding it as a challenge. Others have become involved with the family and have retained the child despite severe problems and often against opposition from other parents. Still others have retained the child despite doubts as to the value of the program to the child and the effect of the disruption to the progam

planned for the other children because no alternative program was available for the handicapped child.

Recently I attended an in-service weekend for kindergarten teachers and advisors at a regional centre in a rural area. One day's sessions were devoted to discussions of problems encountered by the teachers who had handicapped children in their centres. Many of the questions asked were very penetrating and revealed genuine interest and a sense of responsibility towards all the children under their guidance.

Some of the questions asked were:

1. Should one teach all the children to use signs in order to communicate with a deaf child?
2. How can one teach a blind child about things he can not feel or hear?
3. To what extent should one restrict the activity of a child with a heart defect?
4. What does a Down's syndrome child, with a developmental level of two years gain from a program planned for five year olds?

These, and many other equally relevant questions highlight the need for more information about individual children and their special needs to be communicated to the teacher by the referring agency. They also highlight the need for additional training for kindergarten teachers expected to provide services for handicapped children. A small number of teachers both from city and country preschools have the opportunity to participate in a ten week in-service course with practical and theoretical content at the Special Unit for Exceptional Children at the Child Study Centre at the University of Western Australia. This is helpful but the numbers involved are restricted. At present this course is not available to advisory teachers although some who have participated are now serving as advisors.

In most pre-service training for teachers some introductory lectures on handicapped children are given but courses on Special Education are not generally available for Early Childhood Education students except as optional electives. Colleges should be encouraged to extend their coverage of child development to include more information about, and experience with, handicapped and deviant children— children who do not conform with the 'norms' of the text books.

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION—UNREFERRED CASES

One area discussed at considerable length at the regional conference was the problem of children who 'turned up' in the normal enrolment but whom the teacher thought were sufif sufficiently deviant to need assessment by more qualified people. These children tended to be the mildly retarded and immature, those with suspected problems associated with vision and hearing, children with coordination and perception difficulties and those with severe behaviour disorders. Often the preschool teacher is the first person to query these defects which although relatively minor may impede the child's functioning and reduce his capacity to learn. The school and child health services are usually very helpful in confirming the teacher's observations and referring the child to the appropriate clinics and in supporting the teacher subsequently, but the initial responsibility for identifying deviations and difficulties rests with the teacher.

At times the preschool teacher is asked to provide a place for a child who has been enrolled in Grade 1 but who is immature, retarded or disturbed. (I found considerable resentment among preprimary teachers who claimed that troublesome and retarded children were being 'off-loaded' on to the kindergarten teacher with consequent problems affecting her program and the well-being of the younger children). At times the 'problem' child spent half the day in the kindergarten and half in Grade 1 causing, in most cases, problems in both groups. Where preprimary children from outlying areas attend for two full days rather than four half days teachers reported problems of physical care with the handicapped children—the retarded and epileptic children in particular found the long day and fatiguing bus trips very tiring. Whenever possible teachers arranged for the mothers to collect these children at midday.

It seems that preschool teachers in country areas are providing help and educational experiences for the 'special case' children and support and relief for the parents far in excess of what is usually necessary in city areas. Their expressed requests for more information, advice about training could be met with an extension of pre-service and in-service training. Also additional 'aide' help should be made available in a centre coping with difficult handicapped children. In some overseas countries—the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and New Zealand—welfare assistants, NNEB assistants, trained aides or extra part-time teachers are assigned to 'special' the handicapped children in a centre. This system could well be introduced in Western Australia using the Child Care Certificate course graduate—the course includes practical experience with retarded and handicapped children.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Much of what has been said about preschools also applies to the primary and to some extent to the secondary schools.

Paraphrasing from a film 'Learning Together' produced by the Open University the following points are worth considering:

When planning to 'integrate' a handicapped child into a regular classroom the principal should:

1. Discuss the issues with all the teachers concerned and gain their cooperation.
2. Evaluate the suitability of the building for the child and remove hazards and make necessary alterations, such as ramps for wheel chairs and easy access to toilets, before the child commences school.
3. Confer with previous teachers, medical personnel, therapists and parents so that there is adequate information and advice available before the child enters the school and when needed.
4. Before the child starts, prepare the children by giving them simple explanations about the child's problems but once the child is in school expect him to use the normal equipment and to follow the regular routine as closely as possible so that his 'special' status does not isolate him from the other children.

5. Expect the child to achieve at the highest level of which he is capable. Encourage him to make his own adaptations rather than to wait for suggestions from others. Foster independence, initiative and a realistic level of aspiration in the child and tolerance, patience and understanding in the other children. Acceptance will depend on the child himself more than anyone else—if he is undemanding, friendly and cooperative he will stand a better chance of acceptance than if he is peevish, obtrusive and uses his handicap to get his own way.

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN WITH HANDICAPS

In Western Australia we have a special problem in meeting the needs of our Aboriginal children. In theory the educational needs of handicapped Aboriginal children are not intrinsically different from those of other cultural groups but in practice there are special problems which make for greater difficulties. Many of the children live in substandard housing with inadequate facilities for hygiene. Poor nutrition and exposure to infections result in malnutrition and diseases such as meningitis and other infections which may cause handicap. (Middle-ear infections among Aboriginal children are one of the major causes of hearing impairment in this State). Some of the parents are illiterate and others are very reluctant to participate in parent education. Most Aboriginal children have few toys and while the parents usually love their children dearly and try to help them as much as possible many lack the capacity to assist in the education of their children. Special preschool facilities provided by the Early Childhood Branch of the Education Department are providing considerable help both for the young children and their families. Parents have learned to trust and depend on the preschool staff—particularly the staff of the mobile units which visit Aboriginal settlements. Thus kindergarten teachers working among Aboriginal children, both in segregated and integrated centres, are often able to identify children with physical and intellectual handicaps and to refer the child for assessment. Once referred, the health and welfare services provide facilities and support so that full investigations can be undertaken. If necessary the child will be sent to Perth for diagnosis, treatment and educational planning. But difficult decisions often have to be made especially for blind or deaf children. Is it better to board the child in Perth so that he can get the specialized education he needs or should he remain with his family and the community which accepts him? Our distances are so great that it is impossible to provide visiting teachers to isolated handicapped children in our northern and outer rural areas and some children are not receiving adequate 'education' although they are receiving reasonably satisfactory community care and support. Wherever possible handicapped Aboriginal children are given the same educational opportunities as other handicapped children in the area but specific problems can and do arise especially in areas where the families are still nomadic.

Conclusions

Finally, observations and experience in the United States of America, particularly California, led me to conclude that when integration is forced upon a school system

by legislation without sufficient preliminary notice it does not work satisfactorily. Teachers and guidance officers and specialist therapists need time for training and preparation to meet the needs of the child who would formerly have been in a special school with small classes, specialist teachers and adequate support staff. It was evident that many teachers resented the extra work and felt inadequate to provide adequately for the special case child. In fact, many were doing very well but lacking the experience with such children some teachers felt insecure and needed a lot of reassurance that they were indeed providing what the child needed. However there was general agreement among teachers that there was a continuing need for special schools and classes with specialized teachers and small groups for those children whose needs could not be met in the regular classrooms. It is my opinion that this is the situation in Western Australia particularly in the metropolitan area and large country towns—even if small hostels must be established in country centres to provide weekly board for children from isolated homes.

Conclusions

When a conference gives rise to as many topics as the conference 'New Directions in Rural Education' it may be possible to extract several conclusions from its proceedings. Specific conclusions from the various papers in this book, however, have already been presented by several of the contributors in their individual papers so there is no need to duplicate them here. But comprehensive conclusions drawn from the book as a whole are in order, provided they are based on common themes that can be said to run through the collection. The process of seeking common themes from a collage, however, is difficult and is certain to be influenced by the 'eye of the beholder'; in this case Frank Darnell. It is probable that others will arrive at dissimilar and possibly contrary conclusions. Such differences are to be encouraged. It is through a variety of interpretations and the debates they stimulate that the potential for improvements in rural education may be recognized.

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PART SIX

Conclusions

FRANK DARNELL

Conclusions

An overall impression that many substantial programs exist and that support is generous for education in rural areas can be derived from papers in this book. However, at the same time, many papers contain suggestions for improvements in education through hard to bring about changes or ask vexing questions for which answers remain elusive. Historically there has been a tendency to depict education outside urban settings in the singular, that is, to think of education in rural areas as an entity. Unfortunately for those people who are working for improvements in education in rural areas it is now recognised that there is no discrete object that can be labelled rural education. What this suggests is that if we have been deluded into looking into rural education as a single commodity and if we have been seeking a single concept or principle of rural education that may be deployed unilaterally, we need to rethink our position. What must be acknowledged by policy-makers and planners at one end of the education enterprise and teachers and support personnel at the other, is that there is no single theory, principle, concept or notion that is universally appropriate to education in non-urban settings. What may be a good policy or plan for one region may be less than desirable in another. What serves a teacher well in one classroom may not serve a teacher well in another. The quest for uniformity of goals, content and methodology is based on over simplification of a highly diverse situation and has led to complications rather than solutions.

Residents in rural Australia, as elsewhere in the world, encounter as a matter of course, physical, social, cultural and economic obstacles in pursuit of an education suited to their specific needs and the needs of the larger society of which they are a part. These obstacles are becoming better understood, and consequently new promising programs are being advanced. There are optimistic forecasts for continuing improvements; education in rural Australia is now more frequently seen as having its own peculiarities and in some instances attention is being given to them. There is even an aura at times, such as was apparent at the Perth conference, 'New Directions in Rural Education', of anticipation that some day rural education might become the standard for promising practices in education in general. Even so it cannot be said that rural education has yet come of age, although it may be approaching an awkward adolescence and the pursuit of excellence is no longer an unreasonable goal. But before that goal is reached, several issues concerned with relationships between school and community, education finance, Aboriginal education, teacher training, rural curriculum and devolution will need to be resolved.

The particular combination of qualities that go to make up rural people and how they perceive the world around them may distinguish the character of rural life more than geography and vocation. As respectors of learning on the one hand but with the inclination to be suspicious of institutions on the other, the school is often a paradox

to rural residents. To reduce the paradoxical element in school-community relationships will require a more closely aligned partnership between community residents and school staffs. What happens at home and in the community and what is experienced at school are too often unrelated. Formal school systems have the legal and financial means to control education programs and they have a pool of specialists available to work on educational developments. But they may have little knowledge of local conditions and needs. Cognitive sophistication makes it possible to know both one's own cognitive system and that of the different group with which one works so that one may be able to translate both talk and action from one system into the other while recognising the conventional and arbitrary nature of both.[1] Policy makers and those who execute policy may, through no fault of their own, lack the cognitive sophistication necessary to relate to the two worlds of professional education and rural communities.

In contrast to this, local populations may know intuitively what they expect from schooling. But because they lack the authority and professional expertise of those legally responsible for rural schools they are unable to bring their perceptions to bear on the system. Also, educational options from which to choose are generally unknown to them. Thus, ways need to be found to bring the two elements, local people and education professionals into congruence. Each has an essential ingredient necessary to complete the process that the other lacks. Identification of ways that communities and schools can more closely articulate their mutual purposes and needs is one of the most promising avenues that may eventually lead to improved education in rural areas.

Regardless of the problems of developing school systems sensitive to community needs or of the problems of communities becoming sensitive to the role they can play in influencing the education process, there seems little doubt that, as Whitfield writes, 'schools must become more genuinely open and permeable' (supra, p. 10). Where schools have become more open and permeable, rural communities have acquired influence and have realised their essential role in school reform.

Equality of opportunity as a goal of education in rural areas is seldom questioned in contemporary times, but how it is to be achieved and how it is described is. And although equality of opportunity may be accepted in principle regardless of how it is defined, it will be successfully applied only with the advent of provisions for high quality education programs everywhere. This means that extraordinary costs attributable to rurality should be labelled extravagent. Funds expended for education are done so for the common good and although to guarantee equality of opportunity in rural areas may be more costly than in centres of dense population such costs should be borne by the population as a whole just as are other specific forms of education which may be more costly than the typical urban classroom. Formulas designed for financing rural schools need to be weighted in a manner that assures equality of opportunity. 'To talk about the economics of rural education is a trap if in so doing we are led to believe that we can find some widely applicable formulae that indicate

[1] Carroll Quigley, 'Needed: A Revolution in Thinking', *NEA Journal* (May 1968). *In Contemporary American Education*, Edited by Stan Dropkin, *et al.* New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1975, p. 23.

the optimum way of providing services in rural areas generally' (Hind supra p. 137). Fairness requires that funds be allocated in a variety of ways and amounts.

Education for Aboriginals in rural areas is a complex subject and of all the topics loosely grouped under the title of this book, it is the one that will require the most extensive study and the most extraordinary means before substantial improvements in education are realized. When a relatively stable way of life is interrupted by the demands of Western technology and social systems Aboriginal populations are bound to experience unrest. Education is caught up in the struggle of the people to regain a new form of stability, a struggle compounded by a paradox that exacerbates the problem. Education as an element of Western society is a source of strain on the traditional indigenous society while simultaneously offering a means to cope with change and ultimately a new form of stability.

The amount of space in this volume given to Aboriginal education is not commensurate with the urgency of the problem. More intensive discussion and debate is required to stimulate policy which may have the potential to improve education among the Aboriginal population. In particular, recommendations made by Harris (supra. p. 198) in which he calls for more teachers sensitive to differences in Aboriginal school children, incentives to attract and to keep teachers specially trained for Aboriginal schools and extensive professional development of Aborigines as teachers in their own right, deserve attention.

Much of the potential for improvement in rural education is dependent on the education levels attained by teachers and their professional acumen. 'Pre-service teacher training for rural schools requires a balanced curriculum which contains both special as well as general skills which will enable the teacher new to rural education to tackle his teaching task with confidence' (supra., Young, p. 174). It is significant to note, therefore, that teacher training programs with rural assignments in mind are virtually non-existant. There are a few exceptions to this situation, but not enough to come near to meeting the need. Added to this is the near certainty that beginning teachers are all but assured that their initial teaching assignments will be in a rural setting, many of them in extreme isolation. The professional development of teachers from pre-service training through induction to highly specialised in-service training is a need that does not receive adequate attention.

Even if ways are developed for improved teacher training, adequate financing provided, and ways that bring the school and community more closely together are found, there will remain endless problems of curriculum design. Finding the means to accommodate the values held by rural residents while preparing children for the possibility that they will live in a society more apt to be urban in nature than the rural society in which they now live is one of the fundamental dilemmas of rural education. Thus, the curriculum for rural schools remains one of the topics foremost in contention and in all probability will continue to remain so. Of all the many aspects of education, the curriculum should be the one most debated so as to ensure that curriculum developments remain dynamic in nature. In rural education, the debate over the purposes of education and how they may be achieved should be continuing, thereby ensuring an ever increasing source of new ideas.

Treweeke has made the point 'that there has been an increasing appreciation that

Treweeke has made the point 'that there has been an increasing appreciation that education in rural areas must involve a dichotomy . . . education for those that remain and education for those that leave . . . (supra, p. 188). Rural schooling should pursue system-wide objectives to an extent necessary to provide rural children with continuity of curriculum and equality of career opportunity while simultaneously it should be relevant to local values, circumstances and resources. However, these two requirements are not necessarily complementary. It is when they are at odds that school programs are seen as inadequate by one section of the total enterprise or another. Nor can schools be expected to be a main agent in the creation of jobs and the mere presence of a small junior high school does not necessarily lead to anything other than a moratorium as regards the time for the pupils' migration to more urbanised areas (supra, Dahllöf, p. 158).

The dichotomy referred to by Treweeke introduces the problem of education decision making, or more specifically decentralization of education. If authority for decision making is shifted to more community based bodies is there apt to be a better balance of forces vying for pre-eminence in the classroom? Is local control sufficient or necessary to generate education programs to meet local needs'? Is it reasonable to assume that the level of decisions required at the local level must be commensurate with the level of authority to make them?

Writing some twenty-five years ago, and speaking of education in general, Butts described what now might be considered the essence of the need for decentralized decision-making in the rural situation to day: '. . . education is more vital and healthy when it is kept close to the needs of the people and when they feel they have a genuine stake in educational institutions of their own making and for which they have a large measure of responsibility.'[2] Much of what has been described by various authors in this volume reflects the philosophy of Butts. Recent experiences in devolution in Victoria serve as a good example of this:

> In a process of trust we can give real responsibility to local communities. They build confidence, acquire new competences, demytholigize the education system, create new and imaginative methods of people development . . . A community involved education is one that means involvement, through active negotiation in the process of learning, through sharing the teacher's power to define what shall be taught, participating in deciding strategies to be used and having the confidence to challenge a system that fails to allow that sort of 'engagement'. (Supra, McLean p. 59)

This concept, that of local responsibility and authority, if it is to become normalized will require changes that the system and the people may or may not be ready for. It appears from the McLean article that in Victoria there is a potential for local control and the system of devolution now emerging will serve as a trial to determine if this is so. But whenever authority is being transferred from one group to another, willing or not, periods of uncertainty develop and the gains of the past, regardless of the type of system in which they were made, can be jeopardized.

[2] Freeman Butts, *Assumptions Underlying Australian Education*. Melbourne: Australian Council for R. Education Research, 1955, p. 4. Also New York, N.Y.: Teachers College Columbia University, 1955.

To ensure that changes proposed have the potential to result in reforms and retain the advantages gained thus far, certain preconditions of change must be present:

1. incentive to change;
2. power to change in the sense of freedom from external constraints that prevent or severely restrict any alteration in the status quo;
3. leaders capable of carrying out the various functions necessary to bring about change; and
4. a plan for change that grows out of systematic self-examination of practices and current problems, and which anticipates and provides for the technical assistance and materials resources necessary to support the change.[1]

Whether one perceives that conditions are favourable for change is probably the single most important determinant when deciding if an effort to seek improvement in rural education through change should be initiated. Without a clear indication that all four preconditions for change have been met it is unlikely that the effort will achieve the reform sought, regardless of its need.

It is difficult to develop a general conclusion with something in it for everyone, especially from a book with as many disparate subjects as this one. Certainly no conclusion free from controversy is possible, nor should one that is controversy-free be expected. Indeed it is hoped that this conclusion will be looked on as a point from which constructive debate will follow. With this motive in mind the following notions are set forth: It may be to the advantage of society as a whole to have the means of that society distributed unequally in favour of rural residents insofar as education is concerned. Means in this case include funds, facilities and authority for decision-making. However, to utilize these means to the fullest advantage, flexible policies that reflect the diverse nature of the rural population must be adopted. Although promising Commonwealth initiatives and to a lesser extent some State programs take into account differences in rural population groups, present systems are more often based on the premise that rural Australia consists of a homogeneous population. As a consequence, programs and practices are expected to be homogeneous as well. In fact, the opposite is more likely to be the case, that is rural Australia is comprised of a heterogeneous population, and it follows that policies should encourage programs and practices also to be heterogeneous. Determining how shifts in thinking, policies and practices that reflect this point of view can be brought about is the challenge facing all concerned with improved education among rural residents everywhere. Thus, there exists in rural education a need for especially keen imaginations and extraordinary resources combined with the authority to make decisions. For these commodities to have the sought after effect, present policies should be analysed to assess whether they restrict or encourage flexibility. If they are restrictive they should be questioned. Flexibility within the system is the one constant that can accommodate the fact that there is no single rural paradigm sufficient to accommodate all rural situations. Rural systems of education in the future, if they are to continue the pursuit of excellence, will need to be tractable and commensurate with the specific needs of rural populations.

[1] Lee Anderson, *School Reform, Educational Change, and Public Policy*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, No. 74-12008 1974, p. 263.

APPENDIX 1

OECD/CERI—Australia
New Directions in Rural Education
Perth Conference
November 18-25, 1979
Perth, Western Australia

Conference Program

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Programme Day by Day

Sunday, 18th November, 1979

4.30 p.m. Registration
Venue: Foyer, Parmelia-Hilton International Conference Centre
5.30 p.m. - 7.30 p.m. Pre-conference Social Activity
Venue: Swan Room, Parmelia-Hilton International Conference Centre

Monday, 19th November, 1979

9.00 a.m. - 9.30 a.m. PLENARY SESSION. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION Hon. Peter V. Jones, M.L.A. Minister for Education, Western Australia
Chairperson: Dr D. Mossenson
Venue: Parmelia Room
9.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. PLENARY SESSION. LEAD ADDRESS on the theme Education and Local Development. Professor Richard Whitfield, Professor of Education, Head of Department of Education Enquiry, Aston University, Birmingham, U.K.
Chairperson: Mr H. Louden
Reactors: Mr S. Dunn
Mr D. Fischer
Venue: Parmelia Room

MORNING TEA

11.00 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. CONCURRENT WORKSHOP SESSIONS

1.1 THE ECONOMICS OF RURAL EDUCATION

- Overview of Australian Economic Situation in the 1980's with particular reference to Education and the Rural Economy.
- Financing Rural Education — State and Commonwealth perspectives.
- Some major issues — Provision of services, consolidation, transportation
  Assistance to individuals, boarding allowances, subsidies
- Panel — Are there alternative structures for financing rural education?

Major Participants: Mr K. Birks
Mr D. Fischer
Mr I. Hind
Mr R. Lenahan
Mr L McCarrey
Professor P. Tannock
Chairperson: Mr S.W. Woods
Venue: Stirling Room

2.2 PROVISION FOR MINORITY GROUPS — ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

- Aims, objectives and needs of Aboriginal education from the point of view of the National Aboriginal Education Committee.
- Self-management, cultural identity and education.
- Utilization of traditional methods of teaching.
- Bi-culturalism
- Schools and teachers.
- The development of a policy for Aboriginal education from the point of view of a State Department.

Major Participants: Mr S. Albert
Professor F. Darnell
Dr S. Harris
Mr C. Mounsey
Mr J. Sherwood
Professor B. Watts
Chairperson: Dr C. Makin
Venue: Parmelia Room and Parmelia Room Annexe

3.1 CURRICULA FOR RURAL SCHOOLS

- The rural curriculum in an urban world. A paradox?
- Universal elements in curriculum and local adaptation.
- Strategies for maintaining educational vitality in the curriculum of rural schools.
- Curriculum problems in rural education in U.S.A. that have received attention over the last fifteen years.
- The problem of adapting urban designed syllabus material for a rural setting.
- Curriculum autonomy in rural schools.
- Curriculum, the regional centre and the rural school.
- The problem of restricted curriculum in rural high schools.

Major Participants: Dr R. Bohrson
Mr D. Buchanan
Mr J. Newby
Dr M. Skilbeck
Mr O. Tate
Chairperson: Dr N. Hoffman
Venue: Conference Annexe, Hammersley House, 8th Floor

LUNCH

2.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m. WORKSHOP SESSIONS CONTINUE
AFTERNOON TEA

4.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m. OPTIONAL DISCUSSION SESSIONS

1. **Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme**
   Mr G. Diggins and staff
   Venue: Parmelia Room Annexe
2. **Western Australian Correspondence School**
   Mr B. Worthington and staff
   Venue: Conference Annexe, Hammersley House, 8th Floor
3. **Mobile Resource Unit**
   Mrs E. Cuomo
   Venue: Stirling Room

Tuesday, 20th November, 1979

9.00 a.m. - 10.00 a.m. PLENARY SESSION. LEAD ADDRESS on the theme Equality and Opportunity. Professor F. Darnell, Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Alaska.
Chairperson: Professor B. Watts
Reactors: Dr G. Hancock
Mr F. Harding
Venue: Parmelia Room

MORNING TEA

10.30 a.m. - 12.00 noon CONCURRENT WORKSHOP SESSIONS

1.2 SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

- How can educational activities be used to maintain or develop the social fabric of local communities?
- What is the relationship between educational activities and the economic development of local communities?

Major Participants: Dr D.S. Anderson
Mr J.B. Ackland
Ms S. Brown
Mr J. Bucknall
Mr R.S. Johnston
Mr R. Maisey
Mrs S. Randell
Chairperson: Mr M. Angus
Venue: Stirling Room

2.1 PROVISION FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

- Co-ordination of services for rural children.
- Early identification and intervention strategies — particular emphasis on the utilisation of local resources in meeting the needs of exceptional children.
- On site services as opposed to withdrawal arrangements.

Major Participants: Professor A. Little
Mr B. Richardson
Professor B. Watts
Chairperson: Dr N. Stewart
Venue: Conference Annexe, Hammersley House, 8th Floor

3.3 TEACHING STRATEGIES AND SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

- Teaching strategies and classroom practice.
- School organization and time-tabling.
- Staffing policies and needs.
- Incorporating resources into the programme.

Major Participants: Mr B. Courtney
Professor U. Dahllöf
Mr M. Lake
Professor B. McGaw
Chairperson: Dr R. Vickery
Venue: Parmelia Room and Parmelia Room Annexe
LUNCH
1.30 p.m. - 3.30 p.m. WORKSHOP SESSIONS CONTINUE
AFTERNOON TEA
4.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m. OPTIONAL DISCUSSION SESSIONS

1. **Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme**
   Mr G. Diggins and staff
   Venue: Parmelia Room
2. **Chidley Education Centre**
   Mr B. Richardson and staff
   Venue: Conference Annex, Hammersley House, 8th Floor
3. **Early Childhood Services**
   Mrs J. Hardy and staff
   Venue: Stirling Room

7.30 p.m. Feature Film
Venue: Lecture Theatre 1. Murdoch University

Why shoot the Teacher?
Samantha Eggar and Bud Cort

An initial teaching appointment for a city boy to the desolate Canadian north during the great depression provides for a creative photographer enough plot and opportunities for several movies.

It is seldom that a full length feature movie focusses on a school setting in sufficient detail, and with sufficient realism to be useful to educators. This film does.

The one-teacher school has students from years one to ten, very little equipment and no running water or even a well. The teacher is a conscientious, likeable bumbling tryer, completely bewildered by the community of subsistence level farmers.

Almost without the viewer being aware of it, the film illustrates central concerns regarding rural schools such as: the relevance of the curriculum, the need for a wide variety of self supporting material, the problems of wide ability differences, the social and professional isolation of the teacher, and the difficulties of system-level supervision.

However, if one prefers to switch off education for a while, it is an interesting and visually beautiful movie.

Wednesday, 21st November, 1979

9.00 a.m. - 10.00 a.m. PLENARY SESSION. LEAD ADDRESS on the theme Curricula For Rural Schools. Professor U. Dahllöf, Professor of Education, University of Uppsala, Sweden
Chairperson: Professor B. McGaw
Reactors: Dr M. Skilbeck
Dr W. Neal
Venue: Parmelia Room

MORNING TEA

10.30 a.m. - 12.00 noon CONCURRENT WORKSHOP SESSIONS

1.3 DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS — IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

ARE SCHOOLS THREATENED BY DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS?

During the workshop the following questions will be examined and discussed:

- When do educational, social and economic advantages accrue to establish or close rural schools. Is it possible to obtain consensus when considering these factors?
- What provisions should be made in rural schools for students at: primary level,
  secondary level,
  post-secondary level?
- What is the minimum number of teachers needed to provide total educational experiences for today at: primary level
  secondary level?
- Given that Government provided transport is needed for children to attend a one teacher school, what limitations should be placed on school bus services if there are educational disadvantages in school consolidation?

Major Participants: Professor R. Appleyard
Dr I. Fraser
Professor R. Whitfield
Chairperson: Mr J. Greenway
Venue: Stirling Room

2.3 CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL YOUTH

The workshop will examine and discuss the following issues:

- Population trends and job opportunities in rural areas.
- Employment opportunities :in particular areas — mining
  — agricultural areas
  — country towns
  :for particular groups — girls
  — aboriginals
- School services influencing career opportunities
  : work experience
  : career guidance
  : alternative courses.

Major Participants: Mr L. Blazely
Mr R. Stall
Dr T. Williams
Chairperson: Mr H. Louden
Venue: Conference Annexe, Hammersley House, 8th Floor

3.2 TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Three major questions will be addressed:

- Pre-service teacher training for rural schools.
- In-service teacher training for teachers in rural schools.
- Role of teacher training institutions.

Major Participants:
Dr. D. Jecks
Mr R. Johnston
Mrs P. Young
Chairperson: Mr E. Styles
Venue: Parmelia Room and Parmelia Room Annexe
LUNCH
1.30 p.m. - 3.30 p.m. WORKSHOP SESSIONS CONTINUE
AFTERNOON TEA
5.30 p.m. MINISTERIAL RECEPTION
Parmelia-Hilton International Hotel — Swan Room

Thursday, 22nd November, 1979

A. Workshop on Agricultural Education
Cunderdin Agricultural District High School
OR
B. Visits to rural schools and institutions.

A. WORKSHOP ON AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

The workshop will address the following issues:

- The co-ordination of present resources.
- The wider use of existing training facilities.
- Orientation of Agricultural Education towards
  — skills training
  — farm machinery training.
- The separation of Agriculture wings from Town wings

Major Participants: Dr. J. deLaeter
Mr D. Eckersley
Mr M. Kennedy
Professor W. Stern
Mr J. Sutherland
Chairperson: Mr C. Fitzpatrick
Venue: Cunderdin Agricultural District High School.

B. SCHOOL VISITS: a. PRIMARY TOUR

— West Midland Junior Primary School
A small two teacher Junior Primary School enrolling students in Years 1, 2 and 3. A Rural Integration Programme is operating at the school for Pre-Primary Students.
— Caversham Primary School
A small three teacher Primary School situated in the Swan Valley.
— Bullsbrook District High School
A large District High School providing education for students from Primary to Year 11. The school is situated in the foothills of Perth, and is typical of the large number of District High Schools throughout the State.
Lunch: Lunch will be provided at the Swan Valley Restaurant.
Sandalford Vineyard — will be visited on the return journey to Perth, Conference participants will have the opportunity to purchase quality West Australian wines.

b. SECONDARY TOUR

—Muresk Agricultural College
A Post-Secondary Institution for training in the fields of agriculture.
— Northam Senior High School
A comprehensive Senior High School that provides five years of secondary education for students of the Midland agricultural area. Conference participants will have the opportunity of visiting student hostels which provide accommodation for students boarding away from home.

— Toodyay District High School
A District High School that provides education for students from Pre-Primary to Year 10. The school is situated in the Avon Valley, and is typical of the District High Schools throughout the State.
Lunch: Lunch will be provided at Northam Senior High School.
Sandalford Vineyard — will be visited on the return journey to Perth, Conference participants will have the opportunity to purchase quality West Australian wines.

c. SPECIAL EDUCATION TOUR

—Cottesloe School for Partially Hearing Children
This is the only school in Western Australia designed to meet the needs of partially-hearing children. The school presently caters for 30 pupils aged 6-12 years. Up to eight children can be cared for in each class graded to suit the needs of the pupils. The school is located next to the Cottesloe Primary School and the two schools operate as an integrated unit for recess periods, sport and physical education and instruction in drama, art and craft.
— Chidley Education Centre
The Chidley Education Centre situated in the suburb of Mosman Park is a unique educational innovation. Since its opening it has provided a residential service to children from remote country areas who experience learning difficulties. The professional staff of principal, psychologist and teachers, one of whom is a physical education specialist, have received special education training. The centre provides short term intensive programmes of remediation for a number of rural students withdrawn from their local school. The centre also provides follow up programmes for pupils on return to their local school.
— Willetton Special School
The school is located in the suburb of Willetton adjacent to Burrendah Primary and Willetton Senior High Schools. The school was designed for physically handicapped children. Classrooms are on the open plan and facilities include a therapy playroom, kitchen, laundry, gymnasium, and swimming pool. The school has developed close links with the other schools situated on the campus.
Lunch: will be provided at Chidley Education Centre

d. AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TOUR

— Kelmscott Senior High School
An urban comprehensive school that is unique because of its high degree of community participation, mature age student enrolment, and the agricultural course offered to students. The school supports a small farm.
— Narrogin Agricultural Senior High School
A comprehensive Senior High School that provides five years of secondary education for students of the Upper Great Southern Region. The school also provides a two year Agricultural Course for students who have completed three years of secondary education and wish to pursue a career in agriculture. Conference participants will have the opportunity of visiting the Agricultural Wing of the school.
Lunch: will be provided at Narrogin Agricultural School.

Friday, 23rd November, 1979

9.00 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. CONCURRENT WORKSHOP SESSIONS

2.4 A REVIEW OF CURRENT GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES

This workshop will constitute a broad review of government policies and strategies. In plenary and small group discussion it will incorporate —

- An examination of spending in rural education considering Commonwealth and State, and rural and urban contrasts.
- A description of current Federal programmes and policies.
- An overview of current State programmes and policies.
- A field-based view of the effectiveness of these policies.
- A parental reaction to the effectiveness of these policies.

Major Participants: Mr B. Gaines, Mr J. Quinn, Mr D. Lewis, Mr R. Treweeke, Dr K. McKinnon
Chairperson: Dr L. Foster
Venue: Conference Annexe, Hammersley House, 8th Floor

2.5 PROVISION FOR MINORITY GROUPS — MIGRANT AND ITINERANT CHILDREN

- Educating migrant children, principally an urban problem?
- Multicultural education, a cliche or a powerful new idea?
- Itinerant children: the forgotten disadvantaged.

Major Participants: Mr J. Cochrane, Dr S. Kaldor, Mr L. Durand, Mr M. McGowan
Chairperson: Dr H. Pearson
Venue: Stirling Room

3.4 DISTANCE EDUCATION

- Rationale of distance learning: its goals and objectives.
- Systems of distance learning.
- Communication media and technology — new and in 2001.

Major Participants: Mr G. Diggins, Professor B. McGaw, Mr O. Tate
Chairperson: Dr A. Walkington
Venue: Parmelia Room and Parmelia Room Annexe
MORNING TEA

11.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. WORKSHOP SESSIONS CONTINUE
LUNCH
3.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m. PLENARY SESSION
SUMMING UP OF WORKSHOP SESSIONS
Theme 1.0 Education and Local Development — Mr M. Angus
Theme 2.0 Equality and Opportunity — Mr H. Louden
Theme 3.0 Curricula and Staffing — Dr R. Vickery
Comments will be invited from the floor.
Chairperson: Mr J. Davies
Venue: Parmelia Room
5.30 p.m. Closure
Dr D. Mossenson

Saturday, 24th November, 1979 — PUBLIC SESSIONS

9.00 a.m. - 9.30 a.m. OFFICIAL OPENING by The Premier of Western Australia. Hon. Sir Charles Court, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.L.A.
Chairperson: Dr D. Mossenson
Venue: Parmelia Room
9.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. PLENARY SESSION — KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Speaker: Dr C. Maxwell, O.E.C.D. Secretariat, Paris.
Chairperson: Mr H. Hughes
Venue: Parmelia Room
MORNING TEA
11.00 a.m. - 12.00 noon PLENARY SESSION. PANEL DISCUSSION — PRESENTATION OF KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM COUNTRY CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOP SESSIONS.
QUESTIONS WILL BE INVITED FROM THE FLOOR.
Country Conferences — Mr R. Thompson
Agricultural Education Workshops — Mr M. Kennedy
Perth Conference Workshops — Mr H. Louden
Chairperson: Mr J. Davies
Venue: Parmelia Room
LUNCH

1.15 p.m - 2.15 p.m. DISCUSSION GROUPS — PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Conference participants will have the opportunity to meet in small discussion groups and identify problems and issues in providing education in rural areas. Each group will be requested to indicate what they consider to be the three most important issues identified. The major issues will be collated, edited and duplicated in preparation for the discussion session next day. The formation of interest groups, at the discussion group session on Sunday, 25th November, will be based on these key issues.

AFTERNOON TEA

2.45 p.m. - 3.30 p.m. PRESENTATION OF PAPERS
Concurrent Sessions:

1. Speaker: Mr P. Teggelove
   Title: Implementing Education Innovations in a Rural Environment.
   Chairperson: Mr M. McGowan
   Venue: Stirling Room — B

2. Speaker: Mr N. Behrens
   Title: Opportunities and Educational Priorities in a Tasmanian Country Area
   Chairperson: Miss N. Lawrie
   Venue: Stirling Room — A

3. Speaker: Mr O. Tate
   Title: The Correspondence School of New Zealand
   Chairperson: Mr B. Worthington
   Venue: Parmelia Room

4. Speaker: Mr P. Forrest
   Title: Innovations in Post-Secondary Education in Rural Areas
   Chairperson: Mr R. Maisey
   Venue: Swan Room

5. Speaker: Mr M. Lake
   Title: Rural Education Action Project — A Review
   Chairperson: Mr J. Inglis
   Venue: Parmelia Room Annexe

6. Speaker: Mr P. Edwards
   Title: Declining School Enrolments — Implications for Rural Areas
   Chairperson: Mr K. Lockhart
   Venue: Fremantle Room

3.45 p.m. - 4.45 p.m. PLENARY SESSION ADDRESS
Speaker: Mr R. Johnston, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, Dundee, Scotland.
Title: The Survival of the Small School
Chairperson: Mr L. Phillips
Reactors: Mr J. Quinn
Mrs J. Fry
Venue: Parmelia Room

Sunday, 25th November, 1979 — PUBLIC SESSIONS

9.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. PLENARY SESSION. PANEL DISCUSSION
Panelists: Professor U. Dahllöf
Professor F. Darnell
Professor R. Whitfield
Title: Which Direction Rural Education — The International Experience
Chairperson: Dr. G. Hancock
Venue: Parmelia Room

MORNING TEA

11.00 a.m. - 12.00 noon DISCUSSION GROUPS

Conference participants will be requested to nominate the interest group in which they would like to participate. During the session each group will be asked to propose solutions to the problems identified on the previous day and express their proposals in the form of recommendations that may have implications for future research or education policy making.

12.00 noon - 12.45 p.m. PRESENTATION OF PAPERS
Concurrent Sessions

1. Speaker: Mr R. Davis
   Title: Support from Education Centres and Teachers Centres for Teachers in Rural Schools
   Chairperson: Mr M. Bennett
   Venue: Fremantle Room
2. Speaker: Mr D. McLean
   Title: Community Involved Education — A Rural Experiment
   Chairperson: Mr B. Gaines
   Venue: Stirling Room — B
3. Speaker: Professor R. Whitfield
   Title: The Aston Project
   Chairperson: Mr N. Tredrea
   Venue: Parmelia Room
4. Speaker: Mr R. Lenahan
   Title: Living Away From Home Arrangements for Isolated Children in Queensland.
   Chairperson: Mrs A. Symmington
   Venue: Fremantle Room.
5. Speaker: Mrs P. Young.
   Title: Resourcing the Rural Primary School
   Chairperson: Mr R. Oliver
   Venue: Stirling Room — A
6. Speaker: Sister M. Collins
   Title: Broadening Rural Education — The Challenge of the Spiritual Dimension.
   Chairperson: Father J. Nestor
   Venue: Swan Room.

LUNCH

2.00 p.m. - 3.00 p.m. PLENARY SESSION. LEAD ADDRESS

Speaker: Dr R. Bohrson, Programme Officer, Ford Foundation, Washington D.C., U.S.A.
Title: The Rural Service Delivery Man — Cop, Mechanic or Saviour?
Chairperson: Mr. J. Inglis

Reactors: Mrs S. Broad
Mr G. Atkinson
Venue: Parmelia Room

AFTERNOON TEA

3.30 p.m. - 4.15 p.m. PLENARY SESSION. CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Panelists: Professor P. Tannock
Mr. R. Treweeke
Dr R. Vickery
Chairman: Mr J. Steinle
Venue: Parmelia Room

4.15 p.m. CLOSURE
Dr D. Mossenson
Venue: Parmelia Room

APPENDIX 2

National Centre for Research on Rural Education—A Brief Description

National Centre for Research on Rural Education

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Purposes of the Centre

'Rural' is a comprehensive, non-specific term. As such its meaning suggests different things to different people, depending on background and preconceived notions. The National Centre for Research on Rural Education (NCRRE) has been established with concern for all aspects of rural life. Research, program development, and dissemination of promising practices and ideas will be conducted in relation to the need and problems of people from farming and pastoral areas, country towns, mining settlements and Aboriginal communities. The Centre's primary goal is to improve education in rural Australia through a better understanding of a variety of factors that influence the quality and scope of education.

Work of the Centre

To reach the Centre's goal, work involves study of problems associated with the education of people who inhabit the non-urban regions of Australia, be they school-aged, preschoolers or adults. Topics considered at the Centre may include economic, demographic, geographic, social, health, or cultural factors, especially as they bear on education issues, as well as pedagogy. Activities of the Centre, designed on a systematic and coordinated basis involve:

- research on major issues and problems in rural education which are identified as being of priority;
- sponsorship of national, regional and local seminars, symposia and conferences on rural education;
- development of a base from which a community of scholars, practitioners and lay people concerned for improved education in rural areas may cooperate, exchange ideas and generally associate with each other in furtherance of a common goal;
- offering advice and assistance to government and private authorities, and local communities, when requested, about problems related to rural education;
- operation of a clearing house for gathering, cataloguing and disseminating information on rural conditions and education in Australia;

- publication and dissemination of the resuslts of research and other activities carried out at the Centre, or elsewhere, as widely as possible within Australia and overseas;
- support of relevant in-service activities which are necessary for people directly involved in rural education or in the preparation of teachers for service in rural schools;
- maintenance of links with groups that have demonstrated interests in rural education.

Examples of comprehensive research topics and activities appropriate to the Centre, not necessarily in priority order, include:

- determination of the means whereby a closer relationship between school and rural community may be developed;
- examination of the consequences of demographic, social and economic conditions and trends in rural Australia on education;
- studies involving the educational needs of students residing in remote mining communities;
- studies on financing rural education services, especially studies on education costs of sub-groups of students and comparative costs among classes of schools and geographic regions;
- examination of the effects of staffing practice on the nature and effectiveness of school programs and community relations;
- determination of means to upgrade distance education, especially in consideration of new technological innovations;
- development of specialized teacher-training methods for teachers assigned to rural areas and special populations.

Visiting Scholars

The Centre sponsors periods of residence in Western Australia by scholars from a variety of disciplines interested in research and development work in rural education. Visiting scholars from throughout Australia and abroad are encouraged to affiliate with the Centre and utilize the resources of the University of Western Australia in carrying out their studies. In some cases limited financial support, primarily for travel, may be made available to visiting scholars.

Opportunities for Graduate Students and Post-Doctoral Fellows

Resources of the Centre are available for research students to undertake investigations in rural education which will form part of the thesis requirement for higher degrees or form a basis for satisfactory post-doctoral programs. A limited number of Ph.D. scholarships are awarded each year and qualified postgraduate students

invited to apply for these awards. It is expected that students will be drawn from a wide range of disciplines.

Management and Support of the Centre

The University of Western Australia, in partnership with the government of Western Australia through its Education Department, sponsored the establishment of the Centre in November 1980. Both the university and the government provide funds to maintain the staff and facilities of the Centre and, although it is within the university's Department of Education, the Centre's management and supervision are the responsibility of a board. The present members of the board are:

Dr David Mossenson, Director-General of Education, Western Australia (Chairman)
Professor Frank Darnell (Director)
Mr Max J. Angus, Director (Research), Education Department of Western Australia
Dr Ian K. F. Birch, Head, Department of Education, University of Western Australia
Mrs Sue Broad, National Vice-President, Isolated Children's Parents' Association
Mr David P. Fischer, Chairman of Commissioners, Rural and Industries Bank of Western Australia
Mr W. Hamilton, Deputy Director-General of Education, Queensland
Father James Nestor, Chairman, Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia
Professor Walter R. Stern, Department of Agronomy, University of Western Australia
Dr Peter D. Tannock, Chairman, Schools Commission, Canberra

The quest for new directions in rural education reflects the impact of an increasing demand for something more than passive acceptance of the concept of educational opportunity. Rural communities throughout much of the world are now demanding the same educational advantages as their urban counterparts. The extent to which political decisions are now taking into account these demands indicates the increasing political significance of the rural community voice in national affairs. The papers in this collection are representative of the debate on rural education now going on in many countries. They cover such wide-ranging topics as the rural situation in general, the community situation, the financial situation and the in-school situation.

. . . the search for equity in education should not ignore or downplay the importance of curriculum/instructional excellence . . . government must be involved in rural education not just as an enforcér, not simply to deliver things and people but also to help those who lack hope as well as those who have dreams.

RALPH C. BOHRSON

Ultimately the effective survival of small rural schools depends upon the preparedness of teachers to work in them, and have more than a fleeting affinity with them and their environments; upon the quality of these teachers . . . on the quality of support they secure while in post; upon the quality of the small school to find a way through the elaborate strain of curriculum debate; and upon the quality of the partnership established between the public whose children go to these schools and the teachers who serve in them.

ROBERT S. JOHNSTON

What happens at home and in the community and what is experienced at school are too often unrelated . . . Identification of ways that communities and schools can more closely articulate their mutual purposes and needs is one of the most promising avenues that may eventually lead to improved education in rural areas.

FRANK DARNELL